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Season preview

Our guide to the best
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Gramophone Classical Music Awards 2014

The shortlist revealed!



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Singapore International Competition for Chinese Orchestral Composition 2015

Registration is NOW OPEN!

Organised by the Singapore Chinese Orchestra (SCO), the competition aims to promote musical creativity, stimulate international awareness and to establish a repertoire of Nanyang and/or Singapore-inspired Chinese orchestral pieces. The competition is open to all nationalities and ages. Winners will receive attractive prizes. Winning compositions will be performed by SCO at the Prize Presentation Ceremony & Concert on 21 November 2015.

Award Categories & Prizes

AWARD CATEGORY	PRIZE
Composition Award 1st prize	SGD 15,000
Composition Award 2nd prize	SGD 6,000
Composition Award 3rd prize	SGD 4,000
Nanyang Award	SGD 8,000
Singaporean Composer Award	SGD 8,000
Young Singaporean Composer Award	SGD 4,000
Finalists	Certificate

Competition Schedule

1 October 2014	Registration deadline
30 June 2015, 6pm	Scores submission deadline
3 to 5 August 2015	Preliminary selection
Mid August 2015	Notification will be sent to Finalists
15 September 2015	Finalists to submit part scores
20 November 2015	Finals
21 November 2015	Prize Presentation Ceremony & Concert
22 November 2015	Symposium

For more details, visit the official SICCOC website at www.siccoc.sg.

Interested contestants may also contact Ms Lum Mun Ee or Ms Shi Tian Chan at +65 65574035, or email siccoc@sco.com.sg, on any enquiries to the competition.



www.sco.com.sg
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GRAMOPHONE

SOUNDS OF AMERICA

RECORDINGS & EVENTS *A special eight-page section for readers in the US and Canada*

Beethoven

Complete Violin Sonatas

Duo Concertante

(Nancy Dahn *vn* Timothy Steeves *vc*)

Marquis \otimes \otimes MAR81517 (3h 38' • DDD)



Violinist Nancy Dahn and pianist Timothy Steeves do Atlantic Canada proud in their splendid new set of Beethoven's complete violin sonatas. Professors at the Memorial University of Newfoundland in the renowned seafood city of St John's, the married team take their Duo Concertante name from Beethoven's inscription over his *Kreutzer* Sonata, 'in stilo molto concertante'. The lasting impression they make, however, is of deeply integrated performances that flow naturally as if the music were being created on the spot.

Both Dahn and Steeves speak from within; they listen to where Beethoven is going and align themselves instantaneously to his direction. They can be engagingly rustic and emotionally sweet, as in the last movement of Op 12 No 3, or breathe fiery dialogues into easily clichéd heavyweights such as Op 23 along unconventionally lithe lines; their handling of the same sonata's curious *Andante scherzoso* middle movement is delectable and the concluding *Allegro molto* thrilling. Without sacrificing power or speed, they mine Beethoven's lyrical vein throughout, even in the *Kreutzer*. Dahn and Steeves both have a way with a turn and a trill, based on thoughtful study and practical experience, which they use as expressive devices to liberate the music's ebb and flow. The opening bars of the final sonata, Op 96, are a miracle of such knowledge and poetry.

The recording at the Glenn Gould Studio in Toronto, which was intentionally balanced to favour the violin, catches the velvet sounds and luminous colours of Dahn's 1983 Sergio Peresson and Steeves's 1968 New York Steinway D in an effortless audiophile display.

Laurence Vittes

GRAMOPHONE *talks to...*

Nancy Dahn

Duo Concertante's violinist tells of a meeting of minds in the *Kreutzer*

Some say that the early Op 12 sonatas are unnatural and uningratiating for violinists...

They are awkward in places (for me at least!) and it's partly because Beethoven uses the low register so often; you need to work more in order to project over a modern piano. Also, after the first two sonatas there seems to be a change in the way he uses both instruments. Op 12 No 3 is a real game-changer in terms of virtuosity – the piano part is like his concerto-writing and Beethoven also started rethinking the role of the violin, making it a truly equal and virtuosic partner. It becomes more ' violinistic' too.

Is it a clear journey or progression from the early sonatas to the late ones?

It is a journey but I wouldn't say it's a linear one. There's a quantum leap from the highly charged *Kreutzer* Sonata and the profound simplicity and tenderness



of Op 96. But then No 7 and the *Kreutzer* both seem to grow from the passion, fury and temperament of No 4. Even Sonatas Nos 1, 2 and 3 are all very different in terms of temperament and approach, as if Beethoven were figuring out how to best write for violin and piano.

Knowing the subtext of the *Kreutzer* Sonata, does it lend something extra to your performance given that you're husband and wife?

Actually this was the first piece we ever played together! It was a very intense time because we knew we loved playing together but there were also romantic feelings developing which were totally unspoken, even suppressed, for quite a while. I don't think we will ever forget the intensity of that time. That undeclared but incredibly strong passion we felt in that first year together is a kind of emotional layer that will forever be embedded in the piece for us.

Berenson

'Lumen - Chamber Works'

String Quartets - No 1; No 3. Transpersonal.

jnana - 8; 10; 13; 18. Late 20th Century Stomp.

Emotional Idiot. Prose Surrealism. Very soon

mankind will no longer be a useless passion (Broadway melody of 1996). Rainer Maria Rilke.

Ricercar (for Sven Nykvist)...was near the black plague.... A little boy opened a window 3.

...searching everywhere.... Dithyramb. Treaty of dancing rabbit creek. 'I'. Respectable People.

Stars 1. The Adytum. Tickled to Death. Ingrid Thulin. through this stillness. Ysaújirō Ozu.

Spooky action at a distance

JACK Quartet and friends

Dream Play \otimes \otimes (156' • DDD)



Philadelphia-based composer/pianist Adam Berenson's self-produced

double-CD set surrounds his provocative new String Quartet No 3 with 25 tracks taken from 17 previous discs before concluding with his more conventional String Quartet No 1 from

PUCCINI, VERDI, STRAUSS: STRING QUARTETS

ENSO STRING QUARTET

"THIS FINE, IMAGINATIVE ENSEMBLE IS WELL WORTH KEEPING AN EYE ON."

- **THE WASHINGTON POST**



Photo: Jürgen Frank



Photo: Philip Taylor

BARTOK: KOSSUTH

JOANN FALLETTA
BUFFALO PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

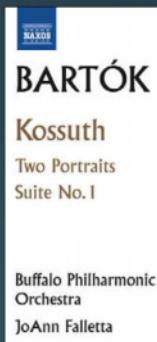
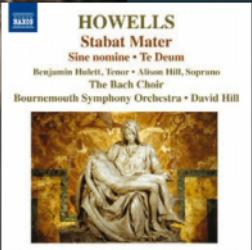
"A RIOT OF SOUND"
- **THE BUFFALO NEWS**

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DAVID HILL

THE CHOIR "VIVIDLY CONVEYED THE MEANING OF THE TEXT."

- **THE GUARDIAN**



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"THE SOLOISTS WERE EXCELLENT"
- **THE ANN ARBOR NEWS**

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1997. Laid out in seemingly random order, and titled 'Lumen' by the composer who 'wanted to say "light" without saying light', this crazy-like-a-fox compilation transforms a myriad of contemporary, classical and improvised musical influences into a myriad of outcomes united by Berenson's own compelling absorption in the process.

Recorded live by the JACK Quartet, for whom it was written, Berenson's 15-minute-long String Quartet No 3 explores an intriguing collection of found-object sounds before ending with the chirps, whistles and faint sirens of a nearly inaudible silence. Halfway through *Very soon mankind will no longer be a useless passion* (Broadway melody of 1996), Berenson interrupts with a moment from Beethoven's *Hammerklavier* Sonata which miraculously if unaccountably leads to something hot and snazzy. His way hip *Ricercar*, dedicated to Bergman's black-and-white cameraman Sven Nykvist, reminds us we weren't alone in inventing modern jazz. Berenson's good natured *A little boy opened a window* 3, which opens with koto-inspired plucks on a gamelan of woodblocks and other synthesised instruments, magically devolves into traditional English nursery rhymes played by toy-soldier instruments. In the midst of *jnana* 8, wonderfully ominous sounds in the lower registers come to surreal life like a large transparent beast.

Throughout it is clear that, despite his serious aspirations, Berenson always has his ear out for a good time.

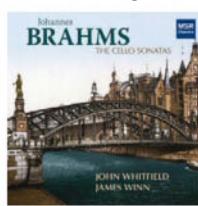
Laurence Vittes

Brahms

Cello Sonatas - No 1, Op 38; No 2, Op 99

John Whitfield vc James Winn pf

MSR Classics Ⓢ MS1516 (54' • DDD)



Two decades separate the two sonatas Brahms composed for cello and piano, and the works couldn't be more different. The E minor First Sonata, from the 1860s, is a three-movement score with an emphasis on elegance and introspection. A far more impassioned Brahms can be heard in the four-movement F major Second Sonata, from the 1880s.

What doesn't separate the performances of the sonatas on this disc featuring cellist John Whitfield and pianist James Winn is utmost commitment to the expressive

needs of the music. These are sterling accounts in every way. Whitfield's penetrating timbre and keen attention to nuance ensure that both sonatas emerge with vibrant purpose, however poetic or dashing the cello part may be. The tricky balance between instruments, especially when the cello dips into its lowest range, is never an issue – a manifestation both of the musicians' sensitivity and microphone placement that doesn't allow the keyboard to swallow the cello.

In Winn's hands, the piano part in each sonata beautifully fulfils its role as support system and eloquent colleague, depending on the music's specific demands. There are moments in these works when the pianist must negotiate torrents of notes without losing clarity of texture, a feat over which Winn consistently triumphs.

But it is the distinctive voice of Brahms that keeps the listener enveloped in the performances. Whitfield and Winn don't disappear into the music. Instead, they use their estimable artistic gifts to summon what was on Brahms's mind at these points in his career.

Donald Rosenberg

Little

Haunt of Last Nightfall

Third Coast Percussion with David T Little snare drum/clapping Melissa Hughes voc Eileen Mack cl

Andrew McKenna Lee gtr Toby Driver db

New Amsterdam Ⓢ NWAM054 (32' • DDD)



David T Little's dark, violent score depicting life on the ground during the massacre of 800 civilians at El Mozote, El Salvador, in December 1981 creates a compelling wasteland of fear, pain and mortality in HD-quality music as descriptive as any graphic novel. Although Little's nine-movement identification with the waves of terror that swept over the defenceless populace is expressed in a percussion-based and often very loud and oppressive aesthetic, he doesn't use sounds that are terrifying in themselves, like screams or cries; rather it's the energy and abruptness with which the Third Coast Percussion quartet throw alternating moods at each other that exposes the potential vulnerabilities. Following small moments of relief from pain and blinding epiphanies of faith, Little's notion of final relief comes

only when a person has been ground down fine enough to sparkle off infinitely into time; otherwise, the music ends with no conclusion.

Together with Third Coast Percussion, Little himself on snare drum and clapping, clarinettist Eileen Mack, vocalist Melissa Hughes, guitarist Andrew McKenna Lee and bassist Toby Driver combine in an experience that is primarily focused on unleashing the truth. The recording was launched at NYC's trendy Le Poisson Rouge in January 2014, for an audience probably brought up on Little collaborators such as the Kronos Quartet, eighth blackbird and So Percussion. It will be interesting to see how they respond to a CD only 32 minutes long. Collectors should snap it up. Everyone else with the courage should simply hear it.

Laurence Vittes

SS Smith

'A River Rose: Music for Violin'

Hearts. Three for Two^a. A Gift for Bessie^b.

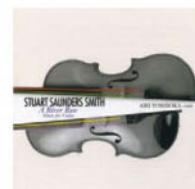
Minor. A River Rose^c. I've Been Here Before^d

Airi Yoshioka vn with Sue Heineman bn

^aMaria Lambros va ^{bd}John Novacek pf

^cJosé 'Zeca' Lacerda vib ^bLee Hinkle perc

New World Ⓢ NW80754-2 (62' • DDD)



The American composer Stuart Saunders Smith is unafraid to reflect

aspects of his life in his music. Each of the works on 'A River Rose: Music for Violin' depicts a person, location or atmosphere he has transformed into sound. Smith's music manages to strike a winning balance between the highly experimental and the deeply expressive. In the six works on this disc, each score or movement has a title that points the listener in some precise direction, though the results are suffused with piquant and vivid surprises. The solo violinist not only plays in four of the pieces but also sings and occasionally hums.

The seven movements in *Hearts* – with such lower-case titles as 'the disembodied heart' and 'a couple having a picnic and watching the clouds go by' – are striking evocations of Smith's fertile, impressionistic mind. *Three for Two*, scored for violin and piano, describes locations in Maine. Improvisation drives the narrative in *A Gift for Bessie* for violin, piano, bassoon and percussion. *Minor*, whose title suggests both



SIR SIMON RATTLE & magdalena kožená

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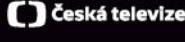
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Seizing the ear: The Toronto Consort's landmark recording of medieval music by women composers gets a pristine new home on the Marquis label

musical chords and the journey of a youngster growing up, cries with anguished gestures for solo violin. Smith teams the instrument with vibraphone in the haunting *A River Rose* and with piano in the assertive *I've Been Here Before*.

Each work is a *tour de force* for the violinist, here the intrepid and brilliant Airi Yoshioka, who lifts every Smith idea from the page. She is as communicative on her own as she is collaborating with superb colleagues.

Donald Rosenberg

‘Full Well She Sang’

‘Women’s Music from the Middle Ages and Renaissance’

Anonymous *Casta catholica. Je vous pri. La Quarte Estampie Royal. And I were a maiden. John come kiss me now. Puer nobis nascitur. The Queine of Ingland’s Paven. St Thomas*

Wake. A North Country Lass **F Caccini** *Coro delle Piante incantate. Aria per pastore.*

Madrigale per fine di tutta la festa **Casulana** *Ridon or per le piagge / Amor per qual cagion / Io d’odorate fronde* **Dia** *A chantar m’ er de çò qu’eu no volria* **Van Eyck** *Doen Daphne d’over schoone Maeght* **Hildegard** *Ave generosa*

R Johnson *Defiled is my name* **Marenzio** *Mentre l’aura spirò* **Sermisy** *Jouissance vous donneray* **Strozzi** *L’Eraclito amoroso, ‘Udite amanti’*

The Toronto Consort

Marquis  MAR81445 (73' • DDD)

First released on SRI in 1993



It’s been more than two decades since ‘Full Well She Sang: Women’s Music from the Middle Ages and Renaissance’ was first released. How good to have it back in this pristine incarnation from Marquis Records. Members of the Toronto Consort – many of them now stars in the field of early music – perform 18 selections with exceptional finesse and urgency.

The programme gives due attention to female composers and performers, while also taking up subjects set forth from women’s perspectives (some to music by male composers). A number of the pieces are by anonymous composers who likely were forbidden to have their names

associated with the music. Whatever the provenance, the repertoire is rich and varied, from *a cappella* works and songs for vocal ensemble to instrumental pieces with or without voices.

A model of scholarship, with sections devoted to sacred, court and popular music of the periods, the disc highlights the beauty of works by such iconic figures as Hildegard of Bingen, Barbara Strozzi (a particularly ravishing song titled ‘L’Eraclito amoroso’) and Francesca Caccini. But everything on the recording seizes the ear, including instrumental gems played with fresh and noble discernment.

The vocal performances could hardly be more captivating, especially Laura Pudwell’s silken account of the Strozzi song and Meredith Hall’s numerous gleaming contributions. And talk about versatility: several of the musicians double as players and singers, expertly taking up instrumental assignments or melding and interweaving voices in ensemble pieces with the sophistication that has long been a Toronto Consort hallmark.

Donald Rosenberg

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(The Daily Telegraph)

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(The Independent)

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crunchy harmonies at the end of
track six alone”

(The Observer)

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THE SCENE

The LPO and Jurowski are guests in San Francisco; there's music theatre and a world premiere to enjoy in New York State; Mahler's in Minneapolis and Montreal; and Mozart is the pick of opera

BROOKLYN, NY

Brooklyn Academy of Music

Kronos Quartet / Laurie Anderson: Landfall
(Sept 23, 24, 25, 26 & 27)

The groundbreaking Kronos Quartet teams up with New York multimedia artist Laurie Anderson to present *Landfall*, a 70-minute work that integrates music, digital media and stories to create a dreamlike theatrical experience. Anderson was inspired to create *Landfall* after Hurricane Sandy flooded her downtown Manhattan apartment in 2012; she describes seeing her possessions floating in the water. Following performances last year, critics described the music as channelling elements of Beethoven, Philip Glass and Middle Eastern folk music. Strings are juxtaposed with startling electronics along with Anderson's enigmatic and poignant descriptions of loss. The presentation is part of BAM's Next Wave Festival as well as a celebration of the Nonesuch record label.

bam.org

CHICAGO, IL

Lyric Opera of Chicago

Mozart: Don Giovanni (Sept 27 - Oct 29)

The Lyric Opera kicks off its 60th season with Mozart's *Don Giovanni* in a new production by Robert Falls, the Goodman Theatre Artistic Director. There's some symmetry intended, as *Don Giovanni* was the very first production at the Lyric Opera (then called the Lyric Theatre of Chicago) back in 1954. The Polish baritone Mariusz Kwiecien plays the lecherous Don, with Marina Rebeka, a Latvian soprano, singing the role of Donna Anna, Puerto Rican soprano Ana María Martínez singing Donna Elvira, and American bass-baritone Kyle Ketelsen as Leporello. Sir Andrew Davis is on the podium.

lyricopera.org

MONTRÉAL, QC

Orchestre Métropolitain

Mahler's Romantic Landscape (Oct 3 & 4)

When Yannick Nézet-Séguin took up his baton as Principal Conductor of the Orchestre Métropolitain, the Montreal-born maestro determined that symphonies by one of his favourite composers, Mahler, would be a programme staple. Now, as he begins his 15th season, and having performed all but one of the symphonies since 2001, he brings the

EVENT OF THE MONTH



Rightful place: Vänskä with the Minnesota Orchestra

MINNEAPOLIS, MN

Minnesota Orchestra

Mahler: Resurrection Symphony
(Sept 26-28)

After the turmoil of the past two years over labour contracts (including the longest

lockout of musicians in the history of the American symphony orchestra), the Minnesota Orchestra is back to what it does best - music-making - with its celebrated Music Director Osmo Vänskä thankfully restored at the helm. In the first full weekend of classical concerts, Vänskä conducts Mahler's *Resurrection Symphony* No 2, which is being seen as a symbolic performance for an ensemble and its renovated concert hall, both of which are in a state of rebirth. The Minnesota players are joined by mezzo-soprano Adriana Zabala and the Minnesota Chorale. The concert also features cellist Alisa Weilerstein - chosen by Barenboim to record the Elgar last year - as the soloist for Samuel Barber's Cello Concerto. minnesotaorchestra.org

monumental cycle to a close with Mahler's Tenth. This performance features the Deryck Cooke version of the composer's final symphony, which Mahler never finished orchestrating.

orchestremetropolitain.com

NEW YORK, NY

New York Philharmonic

Thunderstruck - premiere (Oct 9, 10, 11 & 14)

Maestro Alan Gilbert and the New York Philharmonic perform the world premiere of *Thunderstruck* by Composer-in-Residence Christopher Rouse. The work is intended to pay homage to rock artists from the 1960s and '70s. After this upbeat opener, Artist-in-Residence Lisa Batiashvili is the soloist in Brahms's Violin Concerto. The programme rounds off with Haydn's *Drum Roll* Symphony.

nypf.org

SAN FRANCISCO, CA

London Philharmonic Orchestra

Jurowski conducts Russian fare (Oct 12 & 13)

The home of the San Francisco Symphony welcomes guest ensemble the London Philharmonic Orchestra, along with Principal Conductor Vladimir Jurowski, who visit the West Coast to bring a dash of Russian fare to Davies Symphony Hall. These performances feature Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No 3, with Jean-Efflam Bavouzet as soloist, followed by Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique* Symphony No 6.

When Jurowski recorded this symphony with the LPO a few years back, critics praised the exceptional performance as well as the breathtaking range of dynamics.

sfsymphony.org

NEW YORK, NY

Carnegie Hall

A Distant Drum - NY premiere (Oct 28)

October sees the start of Carnegie Hall's Ubuntu: Music and Arts of South Africa, a festival that celebrates the country's vibrant musical culture. One pick from many performances (including Hugh Masekela, Ladysmith Black Mambazo, and soprano Elza van den Heever) is the New York premiere of *A Distant Drum*. Violinist Daniel Hope curates and performs this music-theatre production, joining forces with his father, writer Christopher Hope. A Carnegie Hall commission, this piece tells the story of Nat Nakasa, the trailblazing black South African writer and journalist, who left behind life under Apartheid for New York in the 1960s. The outstanding ensemble of musicians and actors includes cellist Vincent Segal, percussionist Jason Marsalis, actors Atandwa Kani and Christiaan Schoombie, and South African music authority Andrew Tracey, who is the musical supervisor for this event.

carnegiehall.org

Previews by Damian Fowler

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The value of a recording is constantly changing

How much is a recording worth to you? What's its value – both artistic and in monetary terms? This is something that's been brought into question quite starkly in recent years. Firstly, the increasing numbers of super-budget back-catalogue reissues – or even new recordings from the likes of Naxos – have caused many a buyer to pause a little longer before shelling out for a full-price disc. More recent still, the rapid developments in online music – first downloads, then streaming – have made most of the history of music available for free or at the very least through an astonishingly good value subscription model.

How things have changed. An industry colleague this week told me of the price to a record collector, back in 1963, of Herbert von Karajan's first Beethoven symphony cycle with the Berlin Philharmonic, issued by Deutsche Grammophon (the Ninth Symphony is the subject of this month's Classics Reconsidered – see page 108). The eight-LP set, when purchase tax was added on, cost £14 and 8 shillings (£14.40). At the time, the average British weekly wage was about £15. In the US it cost \$47.98 – about 40 per cent of the average weekly American wage at the time, but even so, still a very significant investment. (As indeed was DG's in making the recording – the label spent 1.5m Deutschmarks and had to sell at least 100,000 to break even. They need not have worried as, one decade on, it had sold 1 million copies.)

The set's just been remastered and handsomely packaged. You can now pick it up for about £45, less than a tenth of today's average weekly wage.



The situation today, however, is perhaps more nuanced than it first appears. It is, of course, an amazing advance for mankind that the great musical art of the world is now so affordably available to all. But at the same time, as so much has become free, there's been an increasing interest in recordings that *do* carry a premium price. The riposte to those cheaply packaged reissues are beautiful box-sets which enshrine a musician's output and present it as a cultural item of (literally) weight. As for new releases, the beautifully produced presentation of Cecilia Bartoli's annual 'concept album' – photos and essays adding context and understanding – increases the item's desirability, and sells in vast quantities (reaching well beyond the traditional 'classical enthusiast'). More recently, even vinyl has made a small but successful comeback, despite – or even because of – its greater cost.

It's not just physical items either: on the online front, higher-resolution and studio-master downloads are persuading many digital collectors that spending more is worth doing. And while music can essentially be streamed for free, committed listeners are beginning to see the benefit of paying for better quality, and uninterrupted, listening. At Qobuz, a streaming company we've formed a partnership with, nothing is free, but subscribers are offered lossless sound and access to an extensive catalogue that offers majors as well as many indies. It's encouraging that even in this potentially free-for-all music world, people who value recordings are still prepared to pay for them. Even if not quite in the same way as in 1963.

martin.cullingford@markallengroup.com

THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS



Paganini's First Violin Concerto, the subject of this month's Collection, made a deep impression on

JEREMY NICHOLAS when he first heard it in his teens. 'Its gorgeous operatic themes and exuberant solo part remain irresistible, a seminal work and much recorded,' he says. 'Yet it rarely features in today's concert programmes.'



For **LINDSAY KEMP**, author of this issue's cover story, attending a recording session 'is not always the romantic

experience you thought it would be'. Luckily, this time around he felt 'a tingle of old-time excitement' watching Lang Lang record Mozart with Harnoncourt and the Vienna Philharmonic earlier this year in the Golden Hall of the Musikverein.



HARRIET SMITH first fell for Jean-Efflam Bavouzet's music-making when she encountered his ravishing solo

Ravel recordings a decade ago. Since then, she says, he has become 'a veritable one-man CD factory, yet the riches keep coming. Add to that an inquiring mind and an impish sense of humour and who could resist the chance to interview him?'

THE REVIEWERS Andrew Achenbach • Nalen Anthoni • Mike Ashman • Philip Clark • Alexandra Coghlan • Rob Cowan (consultant reviewer) • Jeremy Dibble • Peter Dickinson • Jed Distler • Duncan Druce • Adrian Edwards • Richard Fairman • David Fallows • David Fanning • Iain Fenlon • Fabrice Fitch • Jonathan Freeman-Attwood • Caroline Gill • Edward Greenfield • David Gutman • Lindsay Kemp • Philip Kennicott • Tess Knighton • Richard Lawrence • Ivan March • Ivan Moody • Bryce Morrison • Jeremy Nicholas • Christopher Nickol • Geoffrey Norris • Richard Osborne • Stephen Plaistow • Peter Quantrill • Guy Rickards • Malcolm Riley • Marc Rochester • Julie Anne Sadie • Edward Seckerson • Pwyll ap Siôn • Harriet Smith • Ken Smith • David Patrick Stearns • David Threasher • David Vickers • John Warrack • Richard Whitehouse • Arnold Whittall • Richard Wigmore • William Yeoman

Gramophone, which has been serving the classical music world since 1923, is first and foremost a monthly review magazine, delivered today in both print and digital formats. It boasts an eminent and knowledgeable panel of experts, which reviews the full range of classical music recordings. Its reviews are completely independent. In addition to reviews, its interviews and features help readers to explore in greater depth the recordings that the magazine covers, as well as offer insight into the work of composers and performers. It is the magazine for the classical record collector, as well as for the enthusiast starting a voyage of discovery.

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The 12 most highly recommended recordings of the month

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The latest classical music news

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Benjamin Grosvenor's 'Dances'

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Abbado on screen and on disc from Lucerne; Nikolai Lugansky plays the Chopin concertos; Mahler from London and Copenhagen

REISSUES

Richard Osborne reviews two new box-sets that give different perspectives on Richard Strauss

CHAMBER

Exploring Howells's violin works; Mozart piano concertos for five musicians; songs without words by 30 composers; three viola works from 1919

INSTRUMENTAL

Howard Shelley plays Mendelssohn; Ricardo Gallén plays Sor; Steven Devine plays Rameau; Pierre-Laurent Aimard plays Bach

VOCAL

Haydn's *The Creation* from Brixen; Haydn's *The Seasons* from Paris; Beethoven's *Missa solemnis* from London; cathedral/college choir round-up

OPERA

Gluck from Václav Luks and George Petrou; Strauss's *Elektra* from Aix and Berlin; operatic rarities by Joncierès, Verdi and Zamponi

REPLAY

Celebrating the Talich Quartet at 50; Kubelík's *Bluebeard*; remembering Alicia de Larrocha

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Examining music history and relevance through the prism of publishing; composer Eduardo Reck Miranda on his art and his processes

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Jeremy Nicholas chooses the best available recording of Paganini's First Violin Concerto

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Martin Cullingford's pick of the finest recordings from this month's reviews



RECORDING OF THE MONTH



'DANCES'

Benjamin Grosvenor *pft*
Decca \textcircled{F}
478 5334DH
► **BRYCE MORRISON'S REVIEW IS ON PAGE 38**



HAYDN Piano Concertos
Jean-Efflam Bavouzet *pft*
Manchester Camerata / Gábor Takács-Nagy
Chandos \textcircled{B} CHAN10808
A true meeting of

minds between soloist and conductor results in a thrillingly individual approach to each of these three utterly charming concertos.

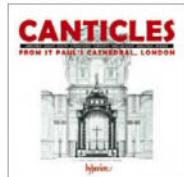
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 46**



SCRIABIN 'Extase'
Michèle Gurdal *pft*
Challenge Classics \textcircled{C} CC72640
Michèle Gurdal impressively

demonstrates the assured technical command and ability to respond to swift contrasts in style required in playing Scriabin's music.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 79**



'CANTICLES FROM ST PAUL'S'
St Paul's Cathedral Choir / Andrew Carwood
Hyperion \textcircled{B} CDA68058
The words have

long inspired some of the most beautiful Anglican music and continue to do so: Carwood and singers perform both the familiar and the new brilliantly.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 97**



DVD/BLU-RAY
GLUCK *Orfeo ed Euridice*
Bejun Mehta *Orfeo* Eva Liebau *Euridice*

Collegium Vocale 1704 / Václav Luks

ArtHaus Musik \textcircled{F} DVD 102 184; \textcircled{F} BLU 108 103

A playful approach to staging and some fine performances – as our critic puts it, 'there is much to enjoy here'.

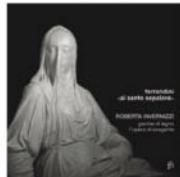
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 99**



BIBER Mystery (Rosary) Sonatas
Battalia; Sirkka-Liisa Kaakinens-Pilch *vn*
Ondine \textcircled{B} ②
ODE1243-2D

Contemplatively and beautifully played throughout, Kaakinens-Pilch and Battalia master the technical complexities of these devotional works.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 62**



FERRANDINI 'Al Santo Sepolcro'
Roberta Invernizzi *sop*
L'Opera Stravagante
Fra Bernardo \textcircled{F} FB1401231

Invernizzi is dramatic, moving and completely committed in this captivating performance of lesser-known but very impressive 18th-century sacred music.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 89**



CHARPENTIER
La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers
Soloists; Boston Early Music Festival / Paul O'Dette, Stephen Stubbs

CPO \textcircled{F} CPO777 876-2

A rewarding Baroque double bill, both works dramatically and imaginatively presented and performed.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 98**



REISSUE/ARCHIVE
SHOSTAKOVICH

Symphony No 13
Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra /

Kyrill Kondrashin

Praga Digitals \textcircled{F} PRD/DSD350 089

A performance of breathtaking power.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 53**

MENDELSSOHN

String Quintets
Mandelring Quartet;
Gunter Teuffel *vn*
Audite \textcircled{F} \textcircled{B} 90702
AUDITE92 659



The Mandelring Quartet conclude their Mendelssohn survey in style, with lively paced and instinctively collaborative playing.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 65**



HAYDN Die Jahreszeiten
Soloists; Collegium Vocale Gent; Champs-Elysées Orchestra / **Philippe Herreweghe**
PHI \textcircled{M} ② LPH013

Colourful, lively and full of joy, Herreweghe and his colleagues remind us again just what a delightful work Haydn's late oratorio *The Seasons* is.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 91**



'SEMIRAMIDE'
Anna Bonitatibus *mez*
La Stagione Armonica / Federico Ferri
DHM \textcircled{B} ②
88725 47986-2

Mezzo Anna Bonitatibus is on fabulous form in this carefully constructed thematic opera recital, packed full of drama and rarities.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 103**



Gramophone Player

Hear a high-quality sample of the music online

FOR THE RECORD



Passing on the baton: Judith Weir (left) looks on as Sir Peter Maxwell Davies bids farewell to Her Majesty

It's official – Judith Weir is named first female Master of the Queen's Music

After weeks of speculation, Judith Weir has been officially confirmed as the next Master of the Queen's Music, replacing Sir Peter Maxwell Davies. Weir said, 'I hope to encourage everyone in the UK who sings, plays or writes music, and to hear as many of them as possible in action over the next 10 years. Listening is also a skill, and I intend to uphold our rights to quietness and even silence, where appropriate. Above all, our children deserve the best we can give them, and that includes access to live music, whether as learners, performers or listeners.'

Weir, who is the first female Master of the Queen's Music in history, would seem to be perfectly suited to the job, with an eye for communicating clearly with large audiences. As she said of her approach to opera in *Gramophone* in 2008: 'In opera I just feel that the complications for the audience of receiving the art work are so great

anyway that the text needs to have a particular baldness, or bareness, and that's just what a lot of libretti don't have. So the more documentary, the more almost everyday things that people say on the stage, the better. It's not just a question of verbal clarity but of the information coming from the stage.'

In addition to the recent Royal appointment, Weir has been named Associate Composer of the BBC Singers from 2015-18.



Denis Matsuev headlines LSO's new season Artist Portrait series

Denis Matsuev is the featured artist in next season's UBS Soundscapes: LSO Artist Portrait series. The Russian pianist is performing three great Russian piano concertos at the Barbican with the LSO under Valery Gergiev as part of five all-Russian programmes.

Matsuev's first concert is on September 21, when he performs Prokofiev's Third Piano Concerto in a programme that also includes Shostakovich's Symphony No 10. The concert is broadcast live on BBC Radio 3. On September 23 he performs Tchaikovsky's Second Piano Concerto and then returns in November, after touring with the LSO and Gergiev to Slovakia, Italy and Greece, to give two performances of Rachmaninov's Second Piano Concerto.

In November, the musicians then travel to Singapore for two concerts before ending up in Australia – the LSO's first visit there for more than 30 years – to give performances in Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne.

Stéphane Denève to take over at the Brussels Philharmonic

Stéphane Denève, the former Music Director of the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, current Chief Conductor of the Stuttgart Radio Symphony Orchestra and (from September) Principal Guest Conductor of the Philadelphia Orchestra, has been announced as the Chief Conductor of the Brussels Philharmonic. He will assume his new role in Brussels in September 2015, succeeding Michel Tabachnik. Denève will also become the inaugural Director of the new Centre for Future Orchestral Repertoire (Cffor), which aims to dramatically increase the amount of 21st-century

Arvo Pärt wins Premium Imperiale Award of 15 million yen

Arvo Pärt has been honoured by the Japan Art Association with a 2014 Praemium Imperiale award worth 15 million yen (around £86,700). The Praemium Imperial prizes have been given annually for the past 26 years and are offered to artists from various fields; previous winners include Sir Norman Foster, Dame Judi Dench and Anish Kapoor. Receiving

awards alongside Pärt this year were the artists Martial Raysse and Giuseppe Penone, architect Steven Holl and playwright Athol Fugard.

Arvo Pärt is one of the most popular and widely performed composers of our time. Key recordings of his music include *Passio* by the Hilliard Ensemble (2/89) and *Symphony No 4* with the LA Phil under Esa-Pekka Salonen (A/10).

Peter Quantrill interviewed Salonen about Pärt's *Fourth* in the December 2010 issue of *Gramophone*. On the subject of performing Pärt's music, Salonen concluded: 'You have to take care of every note. Compare his music to a piece by, say, Xenakis, Birtwistle or Boulez, where you can miss a bunch of notes and you're still in business. With Pärt you miss one and it's a disaster.'



Dynamic: Denève takes the helm in Brussels

orchestral music that is finding its way into the standard repertoire.

Principal Guest positions for Vänskä and Stenz

Markus Stenz has been named as Principal Guest Conductor at Marin Alsop's Baltimore Symphony Orchestra from the start of the 2015-16 season. Stenz made an acclaimed debut with the Maryland ensemble in October 2012 during which he 'clearly bonded with the BSO' according to the *Baltimore Sun* critic Tim Smith. Stenz himself described that meeting as 'unforgettable'.

Osmo Vänskä, meanwhile, has accepted the position of Principal Guest Conductor of the Iceland Symphony Orchestra, 18 years after standing down as the ensemble's Chief Conductor. Vänskä, who has appeared as a guest conductor in Reykjavik each year since his resignation in 1996, will take up his position from the start of the new season this September, weeks after the ensemble makes its BBC Proms debut under Chief Conductor Ilan Volkov.

Vänskä also returns to another former employer – the Minnesota Orchestra – as Principal Conductor at the start of this season, following the resolution of the 'lockout' that forced his resignation last year.



'Gifted': Boris Giltburg's first disc for Naxos, with whom he has signed an exclusive contract, is solo Schumann

PHOTOGRAPHY: BRAM GOOTS

Feted Israeli pianist Boris Giltburg signs contract with Naxos

Naxos has announced the signing of an exclusive recording contract with Israeli pianist Boris Giltburg.

Giltburg has been in the studio in recent weeks recording what will be his first disc for Naxos, due for release in February 2015. The programme of this first recording features the music of Schumann: *Papillons*, *Carnaval* and *Davidstündlertänze*. Current plans are for the second disc to be an all-Beethoven programme of the *Waldstein*, *Pathétique* and Op 111 sonatas, as well as the C minor Variations, WoO80. In 2016 he will record Rachmaninov's Second and Third Piano Concertos with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra.

Giltburg's recent recordings for Orchid have been very well received in the reviews pages of *Gramophone*. In October last year his disc of sonatas by Grieg, Liszt and Rachmaninov was named an Editor's Choice, with critic Bryce Morrison saying: 'I can scarcely wait to hear Giltburg in other works from his already formidable repertoire.' And Giltburg's recording of Prokofiev's 'War' Sonatas was also an Editor's Choice in the Awards 2012 issue. 'Putting my head above a parapet,' wrote Morrison, 'I have to say that these performances of Prokofiev's three "War" Sonatas eclipse all others on record – even those tirelessly and justifiably celebrated performances by Richter and Gilels.'

Regarding the signing, Naxos said: 'We are delighted to announce the start of a collaboration with Boris Giltburg, who is one of the most gifted and exciting young pianists on the current music scene.'

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PODCASTS

As part of our EFG International podcast series, Italian conductor Rinaldo Alessandrini talks to James Jolly about 30 years of his three-times *Gramophone* Award-winning ensemble Concerto Italiano.

CLASSICAL SCHOOL OF ROCK

Pwyll ap Siôn listens in on the rock musicians, including The National's Bryce Dessner (pictured), Radiohead's Jonny Greenwood and Arcade Fire's Richard Reed Parry, who are all writing works for the concert hall.



THE GREAT ANIMAL ORCHESTRA SYMPHONY

Michael McManus goes into the studio to witness the premiere taping of a new composition for wildlife sounds and orchestra by Richard Blackford, using Bernie Krauss's unique and beautiful field recordings.

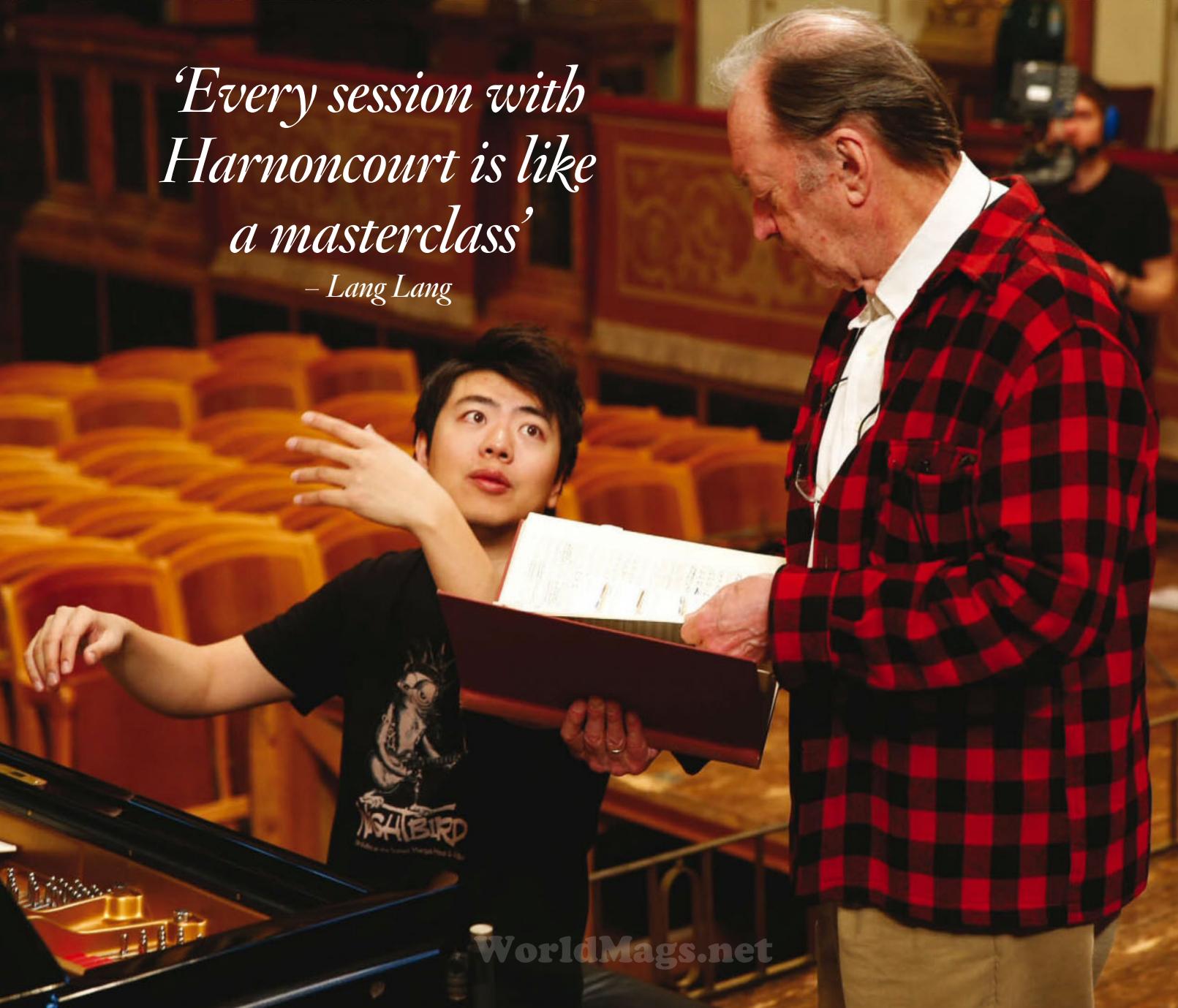
THE GRAMOPHONE PLAYER

Hear tracks from the month's leading releases, including our Recording of the Month – Benjamin Grosvenor's 'Dances', a solo recital featuring Bach, Chopin, Scriabin and Albéniz.



*'Every session with
Harnoncourt is like
a masterclass'*

- Lang Lang





Musical alchemy

The most unlikely collaborations can deliver the most extraordinary results, as Lindsay Kemp discovers when he drops in on Lang Lang and Harnoncourt recording Mozart in Vienna

The Vienna Musikverein does not look this morning like it does at the New Year's Day Concert. There is no audience, no glittering jewels or fulsomely regimented flowers, and chairs have been piled into the side aisles and loggias, many of them unceremoniously inverted. The lobbies and corridors are echoingly empty. It is Easter, and there are no concerts this week, but the old place is not dead. Far from it. For in the glowing Goldener Saal, in what feels like a throwback to a former age of recording, the Vienna Philharmonic is recording Mozart.

Closer inspection reveals a rather more contemporary look to this session, however. On the podium is Nikolaus Harnoncourt, at 84 a revered figure, but who once upon a time, as a questioning and trenchant pioneer of the early music movement, would have seemed the very opposite of what the VPO looked for in a conductor. Many of the orchestral musicians are young and in jeans. And at the front of the stage is a neatly and stylishly dressed 31-year-old Chinese pianist, the most famous yet to have emerged from that lately piano-enthused country.

'I only hope that in 50 years' time I can have his energy!' says Lang Lang of the conductor he first met in 2007.

'He invited me to his wonderful home in Salzburg and showed me his wood sculptures, and the forte pianos and harpsichords that he has there, and I played him Bach's *Goldberg Variations*. He taught me some tricks to make slow passages sing and be very spiritual.' The two first worked together in concert with the VPO two years later on performances of Beethoven's First Piano Concerto, a project which left Lang Lang with a nagging wish that they should record Mozart. Now that has come to pass, in a Sony Classical recording of two of Mozart's superb Viennese concertos: the grandly tragic, broodingly beautiful much-recorded C minor, K491; and the less frequently performed, sunnier and more intimate G major, K453.

For those used to thinking of Lang Lang as a showman performer of virtuoso dazzlers at Olympics opening ceremonies and stadium concerts, Mozart may seem a surprisingly different world. The handful of Mozart performances of his that can be viewed online have drawn mixed comments, with some finding his approach too haphazardly wilful for their taste. What is clear from these videos, however, is that he has the agility of mind and the range of touch to make a fine Mozart player, which makes one wonder if meeting Harnoncourt – an individualist himself, but one with always a clear sense of purpose and



Harnoncourt and Lang Lang: Harnoncourt has also recorded Mozart's 23rd and 26th concertos with pianist Friedrich Gulda, and the violin concertos with Gidon Kremer

direction – may be just the thing he needs. Lang Lang's respect for Harnoncourt and his willingness to learn from him are touchingly evident: 'Every session with him is like a masterclass,' he declares, to the conductor's horrified embarrassment. 'He just gave me everything from his heart, and that direct connection in music-making is the most important inspiration for me.' But when I ask Harnoncourt what he first saw in Lang Lang he replies unhesitatingly, 'Enormous flexibility; no problems of the body, but a very open spirit and unmoulded musicality so that one can talk like Adam and Eve, without everything being finished already. Straight away the interest and understanding were there, the sound was different, and every hour of work became inspiring for me.'

I have arrived at the start of the third day of recording. K453 has already been wrapped up, and this morning's three-hour session is for the first movement of K491. The initial hour is spent rehearsing, and indeed this is the only full rehearsal there is for this movement. Not that it hasn't been thought through, though. 'I've been preparing this piece for 60 years!' jokes Harnoncourt, and Lang Lang, too, has done his homework: first there was another two-day visit to the Harnoncourt home to work through the music, before Lang Lang took the conductor's ideas out on the road. 'I can say that before I came to the recording session I had already worked for two years on Nikolaus's articulation and his ideas,' he says. 'Nikolaus doesn't know this, but when I was working with other conductors they all wanted to know what he thought about this or that passage. I showed my score to one of them,

'With Lang Lang, straight away the understanding was there, and every hour became inspiring for me' – Harnoncourt

a very good friend of mine, and suddenly he's saying to the orchestra, "OK, let's do this the Harnoncourt way!" So I know it's something I feel really comfortable with, because I

already practised it for two years. I'm pretty ready!'

Harnoncourt's rehearsal method is to play from the beginning, but with frequent stops to discuss details of phrasing and articulation, and to explain his reasoning to the musicians. 'You have to find the vocabulary,' he explains. 'The main focus today was on the first 40 bars or so, because in them is the vocabulary for the whole piece, and you have to stay on this part until everybody understands it and likes it. After that you can go much faster. Some orchestras say a conductor must show everything with his gestures, and yes, you can show with your hands if the musicians need to play loud or short or long, but they really need to know *why* a conductor is asking them for something. This orchestra picks that up very quickly.'

These moments are principally between Harnoncourt and the VPO, with the conductor sometimes talking to them in his low, gravelly voice, sometimes singing when he has a lyrical point to make, and sometimes demonstrating with 'air' bow or timpani stick, usually when something more punchy is required. But Lang Lang is not idle. 'It's very useful that there are a lot of articulations that are exactly the same as the piano part,' he says. 'So I listen while Nikolaus starts the orchestral *tutti*, and there are a lot of things that right away I can take from how the oboe does it, or the cellos or the bassoon. Then when I start playing we don't need to waste time. And also sometimes Nikolaus will like something in my articulation, and he'll stop the orchestra

and say "Play it like that". It means you need to be very quick in your reactions, like in chamber music.' Lang Lang himself peers into the orchestra a lot, and even while playing often gestures with an elegant, downward curve of a free arm to mirror the dying fall that is this movement's predominant melodic shape. Lang Lang laughs away the suggestion that this is him showing the orchestra what he wants: 'No, it's just that I can't help myself. It inspires me a little better, I don't know why!'

When Lang Lang's first entry does come, it is with just such a winding motif, a new one to the movement, opening up another world as so often is the case at this point in Mozart's mature piano concertos. Dreamy and inward after the stormy moments of the opening *tutti*, it seems simple at first, but actually is alive with minute changes of mind and subtle complexities of feeling, and Lang Lang's playing is both delicate and emotionally alert. After 19 bars, as if unable to decide which attitude to pursue, the piano tosses the initiative impatiently back to the orchestra, who repeat the cautious, curling motif which had opened the movement, but which is now pounded out in an implacable *forte*. Harnoncourt, conducting without a baton, looks round at Lang Lang and nods his approval.

For Harnoncourt, this sense of dialogue, of music as a non-verbal communication, is key to any interpretation. Anyone who has read his collection of writings published in English as *Baroque Music Today: Music as Speech* (Amadeus Press) will be aware of his erudition on matters of rhetoric and declamation, but he insists that for him it works on a more fundamental level. 'I have never thought of music as any different from speech. My grandfather could not read music but played the piano, and when he was hungry he would go to the piano and scrape out "I'm hungry". After that he got something to eat. My father composed every day of his life, and when I was three years old in the 1930s I would creep under the piano and always what I heard was a conversation. Music that only paints doesn't interest me very much.' Sure enough, whenever he stops the rehearsal to discuss a point, more often than not it is to find the shape in a phrase, or precise timing of a *rubato*, that will make the music, and especially the dialogue between soloist and orchestra, speak more eloquently.

Instrumental music as speech, or at least as a communicator of ideas, has also played an important part in Harnoncourt's other recent Mozart recordings. Earlier this year he revealed in the booklet-note for his recording of the *Haffner* Symphony and *Posthorn* Serenade with the Concentus Musicus Wien how his reading of one passage in the Serenade was inspired by thoughts of a departing student saying farewell to his landlord. And he has a more radical concept for his most recent release, of Mozart's last three symphonies. 'I don't think they are three symphonies,' he says, rather disarmingly. 'Mozart never wrote great works without anybody asking for them, but suddenly in the summer of 1788 he wrote three symphonies in six weeks, with no commission! So, I asked myself what has happened there? The first of them, the E flat, starts with an overture, and has no ending. The second, the G minor, has no beginning – it's all appoggiaturas, no melody. But Mozart wrote other melodies in it, and in the middle, what's this? [He sings part of the slow movement, picking out a familiar four-note motif.] It's the theme of the C major Symphony finale. Then the C major Symphony's the only one with a real finale. When I noticed this I was unable to perform them separately any more. And now I'm absolutely convinced that these symphonies should be thought of as one work, as an instrumental oratorio.' It's quite a thought, but what, then, is the subject? 'I don't think it's good to tell you much about the content,' he replies, 'because music

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as speech is always magical. You can't say "Here someone's drinking" or "Here someone's falling on their nose", because then you are trying to fix something down which is actually always fluctuating.'

After an hour of rehearsal, it is time for the first take. There is a retune for the orchestra, before the hall falls silent and Mozart's C minor Piano Concerto begins in earnest. After about 15 seconds, Harnoncourt stops it. He wants that first, low unison C to emerge without edge or attack. They start again, and this time the take is a complete one, save for the solo cadenza, which will be recorded separately later in the day, and for now is just 'topped and tailed'. Hearing this first movement uninterrupted now, I can appreciate not just the conversational elements of the reading – it is noticeable how the urgency of the dialogue increases as the end of the exposition approaches, for instance – but also its carefully judged momentum. The tempo is actually on the measured side, but allows the slower sections a gentle lilt and leaves room for effective variations of *rubato* without damaging the underlying pulse. 'This is something I learned from Nikolaus,' Lang Lang says. 'That you keep the basic rhythm, but that you must play freely on top of it. We all know *rubato* means "steal", right? If you steal something you have to give it back, so the important thing is somehow to find the place to give it back. I think in Mozart, if you always play exactly in tempo...' Harnoncourt finishes his sentence – 'he would scream and run away!' Then Lang Lang continues: 'People who say Mozart liked a regular tempo are making a great error. Mozart described his own *rubato* playing exactly in a letter to his father, where he said that the left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing. There were a few singers in the last century who could match this sort of *rubato* – Frank Sinatra was one, and Marlene Dietrich was another, plus all of the singers with whom Gershwin worked – but today we have lost that ability. Everybody now thinks *rubato* means the whole thing goes faster or slower, like the orchestra is drunk. But the real thing is the freedom of the melody against the strictness of the bass.'

When this first take has finished, Harnoncourt and Lang Lang go out to the control room – a scruffy side-office with an imperial view of the Karlskirche's green dome and gilt detailing from the window – to hear the playback. Conductor and soloist sit side-by-side with producer Martin Sauer alongside them and Harnoncourt's wife Alice (a noted Baroque violinist and former leader of Concentus Musicus) completing the inner cabinet. A handful of the players have slipped in at the back. The playback begins, and is for the most part uninterrupted and uncontroversial: Harnoncourt stops it once or twice to discuss a point; Sauer makes the occasional suggestion; players glance at one another and nod in agreement when they hear a detail or a slip they know needs fixing next time. Lang Lang makes a suggestion that a sequentially rising flute figure could be made slightly different each time, and Harnoncourt counters straightaway: 'No, I don't think so. I'm in favour of fantasy, but this would destroy the progression.' There are no further questions.

Playback and analysis do not take long, and after a short break it is time for the second take. It is a whole one again, except for two stops along the way to run back a few bars and correct something. There is no playback this time, and only a few patches are needed at the end to mop things up. Now I am struck by the music's latent menace; this is Mozart at his most beautiful, but also at his darkest – even fearful – and the performance has managed to capture both elements.

With half an hour of the session to go, there is time still to do a rehearsal run-through of the second movement, not

due to be recorded in earnest until tomorrow. Most of the discussion this time centres on the wind-writing in the A flat major second episode, whose rustic sound Harnoncourt wishes to emphasise. 'This is peasant music,' he explains. Singing out the clarinet line, he declares that 'every peasant sings this every day. You don't have to compose it, it's already there. And the bass [here he sings out a gentle oom-pa-pa-pa], every village had a trombonist or an ophicleide player who played that. And Mozart heard that kind of thing at the Maria Plain, near Salzburg, and thought, "Aha, that would make a wonderful contrast". When he overlaps it with the more serious music, it's like a philosopher walking through a cowshed!' Lang Lang laughs: 'And then back to the church!' 'Yes,' says Harnoncourt, 'back to the church and E flat major!'

Like all good recording sessions it seems, this has been a mixture of mutual respect, good preparation and a readiness to change things on the day if that seems the right thing to do. And if it seems at all as if Harnoncourt's strongly formed ideas might be hard to shift, Lang Lang will tell you otherwise: 'Sure, everything is in his mind already, so that from the first rehearsal he is telling me what for him is important, and everything is extremely precise – the sound, how to use the bow, how to breathe and so on. But the reality is that on the podium every take he plays is different! This time a little more to the bass, that time a little more to the horn. It's fantastic.' 'You have to come with a lot of possibilities,' says Harnoncourt. 'Some of them are wrong, and those you must not touch. But from the remaining good ones you cannot always be ending with the same result, otherwise you'd just be like a parrot.'

So will these two work together again? 'Look at my diary,' says Harnoncourt with mock exasperation. 'One cannot conduct from the grave!' But Lang Lang's mind is already racing. They nearly agree on Bartók, then Lang Lang proposes the Strauss *Burleske*. 'No,' replies Harnoncourt firmly. 'Gershwin.' And with a glint in his eye he starts singing and conducting the opening of *Rhapsody in Blue*. 

Read the review of Mozart's final symphonies on page 50; Lang Lang and Harnoncourt's concerto recording will be reviewed in a future issue

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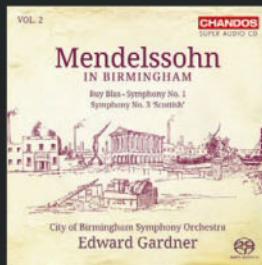
Disc of the Month

Haydn

Piano Concertos, Hob. XVIII: 3, 4, and 11

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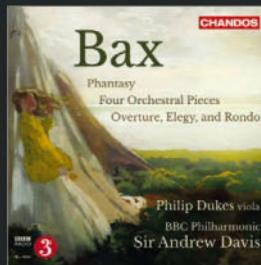


Mendelssohn in Birmingham Vol. 2

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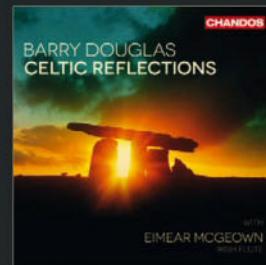


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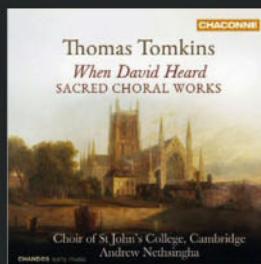


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The Choir of St John's College, Cambridge has been a cornerstone of the great English choral tradition since the

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CHAN 0804



BECOMING Bavouzet

Harriet Smith meets the gregarious pianist Jean-Efflam Bavouzet to talk about his new recording of Haydn's piano concertos, including some rather provocative cadenzas...

For an era when musicians seem to be expected to emerge fully formed straight from the womb of the conservatoire, Jean-Efflam Bavouzet is a striking example of an artist who simply grows and grows. For many, it was his recording of Ravel's complete solo music for MDG that first made an impact, back in 2003. Like his compatriot Pierre-Laurent Aimard, or the great American pianist Richard Goode, his career has been what some might regard as a slow burn, but it's been all the richer and more interesting for it.

Now, at 51, Bavouzet is riding high; his *Gramophone* Awards are mounting up and he's bursting with anticipation of the multifarious projects in the pipeline. Sometimes it seems as if he is single-handedly keeping the record industry afloat, and that everything he touches turns to gold, be it the complete concertos of Bartók and Prokofiev or his ongoing cycles of Beethoven and Haydn sonatas.

He's an extraordinarily engaging figure, both on and off the concert platform. We met in St Pancras Station, where he was en route for home – Paris. Time was not a problem, he said – 'My wife has gone shopping!' The night before, he'd performed Rachmaninov's Second Piano Concerto in Nottingham with Vladimir Ashkenazy and the Philharmonia. The Russian is someone whom Bavouzet holds in affectionate regard. 'He is such a great example of a man constantly learning new repertoire – I admire that intensely.' He has proved important in more ways than one. 'We were first in contact when he rang me up out of the blue and asked if he could be the first to record my transcription of *Jeux* with his son Vovka. I said "Maestro, nothing better can happen to this score. Yes! Of course!" And so he did.' Ironically, Bavouzet himself has yet to record that version, though it was with his audaciously dexterous and imaginative solo piano incarnation that he ended his much garlanded Debussy series for Chandos. 'That was a surprise for me too, that the series ended like that, because when I started it I wasn't even aware that *Khamma* existed in a two-hand version. I knew *Le boîte à joujoux*, of course, but the three ballets made a perfect combination...though perhaps you need to be a Debussy freak for that disc because it's not his most obvious music by any means.'

Certainly at that point, Bavouzet would have classed himself as a Debussy freak. 'It's interesting how you have phases in

your life – that Debussy project came at a time when I was completely entranced by his music; hearing just a few notes of one of the *Arabesques* as a ringtone would reduce me to tears!'

It strikes me that in Chandos he has found the perfect sparring partner. 'Oh yes! They let me record pretty much what I like and they bombard me with propositions! The difficulty is saying no because so many ideas are very tempting.' Even if his earlier successes were with the music of his compatriots, Bavouzet has avoided being pigeonholed as a French specialist – 'though if you'd told me 10 years ago that I was going to embark on the complete Haydn sonatas I'd have been surprised!'

My brief for this interview, though, was to talk not about the sonatas but Haydn's concertos, which Bavouzet has recorded with the Manchester Camerata and its Music Director Gábor Takács-Nagy. But things were never going to remain that straitjacketed in the two hours

that followed – subjects certainly ranged wide! Dragging him back to the matter in hand, I asked how the recording sessions had gone: 'Working with a musician like Gábor is so inspiring, so positive. I'm curious to hear how these will turn out as I haven't heard the takes yet. And,' he adds, eyes glinting with mischief, 'there are a couple of unorthodox cadenzas.'

I ponder the question of why these pieces aren't better known, to which Bavouzet responds that that could be said of much of Haydn's music. 'There's a sense that you have to make this music. For instance, in the slow movement of the F major, it's like a great opera aria for piano and I have great pleasure playing it. But it needs – this is my feeling anyway – embellishment. In that respect I was very much inspired by what Friedrich Gulda does in Mozart. And, while these Haydn concertos don't have the dramatic tension of a Beethoven concerto or the magical grace of one by Mozart, what I love about Haydn is all those strange angles, the strange curves in unexpected corners that surprise you. He plays games with your brain. Of course he's an emotional composer, but he's someone who speaks to my intelligence, to my intellect. I would put Stravinsky in that category too.' And Prokofiev? 'Ha, yes. And of course Prokofiev very much liked Haydn. The first movement of his Fifth Concerto is like a Haydn minuet taken on by a Cubist – with all the angles and planes visible simultaneously.'

Would he agree too that Haydn is first and foremost a musician's composer? 'Yes, I think it's partly to do with melody.

*What I love about Haydn is all those
strange angles that surprise you –
he plays games with your brain'*

Can you sing any of Haydn's melodies off the top of your head?' I suggest that I could give him the Theme of the F minor Variations but will spare him my singing. 'Ah, yes! But even there it's as much about rhythm as melody.' We digress on to other composers who score more highly among musicians than in public popularity contests. Bavouzet names Debussy and Schumann. No argument there.

'But yesterday when I was playing Rachmaninov's Second I kept thinking it's no wonder that this work is so loved by the public. The orchestra were playing Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony in the second half and, heard played that well, again you can see why these pieces are so popular: you could never tire of them! Having said that, of course I would love to play Haydn's F major Concerto more often in concert – I hope the recording will help. I found it worked for Prokofiev, and I got to play the Left-hand Concerto [No 4] in Seattle just a few months ago. Usually when I play this piece it's a complete flop with the audience – I think it's the bizarre ending rather than my playing – or at least I hope so! One day I thought, let's try something different, so I played the very last note with my right hand and people actually laughed.' But Bavouzet tends to take a leaf out of Sviatoslav Richter's book and not worry too much about whether a piece is going down well.

So will he be learning Rach No 3 next year, having finally got No 2 under his belt? 'No! But I have got a tour of the States next year with the *Paganini* Variations, which I think is another wonderful piece.'

If Rachmaninov might not be on the cards, recording-wise, there are plenty of other projects with Chandos. A disc of transcriptions with François-Frédéric Guy focuses on three masterpieces written in 1913: Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*, Bartók's *Two Pictures* (arranged by Zoltán Kocsis) and Bavouzet's own version of *Jeux* for two pianos.

And when he's not busy playing or recording, there's the small matter of a six-day piano festival in Lofoten, a breathtaking archipelago in northern Norway. 'It's real *Lord of the Rings* landscape: mountains, fjords – an otherworldly place. There are lovely little churches dotted all over the place and the pianos are in perfect condition! I first played there 10 years ago. So when they came to me and asked if I wanted to help them organise the festival it wasn't a difficult decision – what could be more agreeable than picking up the phone and inviting your friends and musicians who you admire to participate?' This year's festival did just that, with Paul Lewis, Louis Lortie, Lise de la Salle, Christian Ihle Hadland and the young Russian György Tchaidze, whom Bavouzet spotted while on the jury of the 2009 Honens Competition in Calgary. Add to that the Engegård Quartet playing, among other things, Beethoven's



Haydn ambassador: Bavouzet's earliest recording in 1991 was of Haydn's sonatas

rarely performed arrangement of the Ninth Piano Sonata, Op 14 No 1, and you could share Bavouzet's enthusiasm. Oh, and did I mention the midnight sun?

One pianist whom he'd originally approached but who has yet to find a gap in his schedule is Nelson Freire. Bavouzet mentions having encountered him recently in São Paulo (where, it emerges, the Frenchman was busy recording Stravinsky's works for piano and orchestra including taking the prominent piano part in the orchestral version of *Petrushka*). 'He played Beethoven's Op 111 – one of his first performances of the work, he told me. It was wonderful, wonderful. And he plays Chopin – and Debussy

– ah, so very well. He's the kind of musician where he could play the phone book and I'd go to hear it!'

Speaking of Beethoven, it strikes me that, among current sonata cycles, Bavouzet's stands out for his very cordial relations with the composer. That, and the fact that he makes you so aware (unsurprisingly) of the way Beethoven's sonatas grew out of those of Haydn. 'If you'd asked me 15 years ago about Beethoven, I'd probably have said "Why bother to record another Beethoven cycle?" But – and perhaps I'm just trying to justify myself – I now feel that it's important that there's a continuity of tradition, that we should continue to play these unquestionable masterpieces.

You could argue that a new cycle is just competing with those already out there – Schnabel, Gulda, Arrau, Brendel – but for a new generation of

music-lovers, who never had the opportunity to hear these great pianists in concert, it's almost a duty for us to continue to play and record these works. If we don't, we break the evolving, non-stop process of interpretation.

'Naturally, we don't play Beethoven as musicians of the past did. Some would say that's a shame! We play at different tempos; we don't play with the *rallentandos* and *accelerandos* of historic players; we have a different perception of time, but then we live in a different world – different instruments, different acoustics. And we have a different rapport with music altogether. We live in a world where it's entirely possible to have all Beethoven's sonatas in your phone if you want. And so I think it's important that we musicians somehow transmit, honestly, humbly, what we regard as value in music.'

'It's such rich music and you can approach it from so many angles. There are no "ultimate" right or wrong solutions. I don't know of many composers where, as with Beethoven, your interpretation evolves as you grow up and mature. Beethoven speaks so openly and so intimately of himself, it's as if he's opening his heart to you. And so what he says reaches you and touches you deeply, which means it resonates in different ways as you go through life. I totally understand why pianists such as Brendel recorded the cycle of sonatas several times.'

Is that more true of Beethoven than anyone else? 'I think so, definitely! I was trying to analyse why; I think it's because, with Beethoven, the performer has to be simultaneously a complete architect, a poet of the greatest inspiration and a virtuoso. That's why this music is so difficult to play – because if you take out one of those components, something vital is lost. While Chopin is a great composer, if you're a real poet you don't need to be an architect to play his music well. Though of course if you're not a poet in your soul, Chopin is not a good idea. Just as if you don't have the right virtuoso equipment, you'd better not touch Rachmaninov!'

Does he think that Beethoven has become any easier as the years have passed? 'I think the point for me is that he's a composer with whom I've always been in contact, except during the time when I had functional dystonia [a neurological movement disorder], which meant he was out of reach technically – although that led to Haydn. But he has otherwise been a constant in my life.'

Beethoven duly wrapped up, there's just one more question: those Haydn cadenzas! Bavouzet laughs conspiratorially. 'There are, let's say, two categories of cadenzas. One that will be more or less standard, in the D major Concerto for example, and for the first movement of the G major too. But for the F major, I went rather further, slightly provocatively, in the jazzy direction.' More chuckling. 'It came quite naturally; it just seems to me that if you've got a cadenza in a piece where your playing is, shall we say, already not entirely orthodox, then there's no point in doing something "straight". I was deliberately trying to avoid the standardisation of the cadenzas – with the trills and so on – and I think I've found some original alternatives for that. The thing about Haydn is that sometimes his modulations are absolutely mind-boggling, so I exploited that. Also, writing your own cadenzas makes the piece a little bit more personal. Like the little girl dressing a doll with clothes she has made so that it becomes *her* doll, so it is with cadenzas!' As for the results, well we'll just have to wait and see... 

► To read Gramophone's review of Bavouzet's Haydn, turn to page 46

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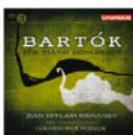
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SOUND SCULPTOR

For Robin Ticciati, whose Scottish Chamber Orchestra celebrates its 40th anniversary this year, sound is everything – especially when approaching Schumann's symphonies, writes James Jolly

For many years you could identify orchestras by their sound; you could even identify the sound that particular conductors drew from their ensembles. There was an Ormandy-Philadelphia sound, there was a Karajan-Berlin sound, there was a Mravinsky-Leningrad sound. In the post-war musical world, as a group of conductors rebuilt the great ensembles, their striving for orchestral virtuosity often went – thankfully – hand in hand with the development of a

genuine personality of ensemble (think of Reiner's Chicago Symphony or Szell's Cleveland Orchestra).

Nowadays you're much more likely to hear conductors talking about what the *orchestra* brings to the music-making. A Rattle, Jansons or Chailly will happily acknowledge the partnership and how it enriches the sound they produce. To an even younger generation of conductors, brought up on period performance alongside a more traditional approach,

there's a fascination not only at a 'corporate' level (the orchestra's overall musical personality) but also from composer to composer.

For Robin Ticciati, the youthful Principal Conductor of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, sound – particularly that of music of the Romantic era – is a growing fascination. After five seasons together and several recordings – they've recently recorded the four Schumann symphonies for Linn – this doughty and remarkably flexible orchestra retains a place very close to Ticciati's heart. It only takes a few minutes to realise that he not only adores working with them, but that he thrives on the approach they adopt to all sorts of music. It's something he obviously draws upon as a conductor, and something that has its roots in the SCO's relationship with the musically omnivorous Sir Charles Mackerras. 'They love a real challenge,' Ticciati says. 'I love the fact that within a single programme we can play Haydn, Ligeti and end up with a Schumann symphony. We've got natural horns for a Haydn symphony, modern horns for the Ligeti Chamber Concerto, then Vienna horns for Schumann. And actually what's wonderful is the horns are up for it – they want to do it. There have always been natural horns and period timpani; Charles was wonderful at bringing them in and he even bought the orchestra the timps. And that's really a lovely thing.'

To meet Ticciati is to encounter someone so totally in love with music, and more important, with *making* music, that it's hard not to be swept up by his enthusiasm; he comes across as a genuinely nice guy. With him, there's absolutely no sense of entitlement (as with many of his colleagues): he simply exudes joy at doing what he does. He's also disarmingly honest to talk to – if he doesn't know the answer to a question, or hasn't really considered the topic, he just says so. We met some time before his debut as Glyndebourne's Music Director, and, therefore, long before the critical tornado that hurtled out of Sussex and around the world as a result of this season's *Der Rosenkavalier* and its first-night reviews. Yet having talked to Ticciati on a couple of occasions about the role of conductor, and more particularly, that of Music Director, I know he'd have taken the whole affair very much to heart – for him, the 'pastoral' side of the job is not undertaken lightly. That much is evident when he talks about his beloved SCO, an ensemble celebrating its 40th birthday this season. In fact, he's only really happy being interviewed if the focus is on his orchestra and not himself.

For some reason, 2014 seems to be the year of the Schumann symphonies with fine cycles emerging (or having emerged) from Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Sir Simon Rattle and Heinz Holliger. Ticciati may be swimming with the big boys but he's clearly not out of his depth. He sees Schumann as a necessary milestone in the great 19th-century symphonic tradition, and is thankful that his orchestra has not played this repertoire much in the past. 'I think of that incredible legacy from Sir Charles in Brahms and Beethoven – and, for me, I genuinely think that the way to Brahms is going to be through Schumann. When we eventually get to Brahms, we will have had Schumann in our bodies, and so the idea of that later style and that different type of Romantic sound – Brahms the Progressive – will be easier to find. I got completely burnt in my first or second season when we did the Brahms Fourth. I just had to say "OK. That's just too soon with this orchestra." I came away from the week going, "I am nowhere when it comes to finding in my ears – and technically

– what I want from my Brahms with this small Meiningen-size orchestra." But with Schumann, I feel I know what's immediately there and what's wanted. That, and regular doses of Beethoven, might get me to Brahms.'

Ticciati and the SCO's journey towards Schumann started with Berlioz; their recordings of the *Symphonie fantastique*, *Les nuits d'été*, *La mort de Cléopâtre* and the love scene from *Roméo et Juliette* have been greeted with great enthusiasm. 'My fascination with the sound started with the Berlioz. We've two natural, as well as some cylinder or piston, horns. "What exactly are those piston horns?" I'd ask myself – and that opened the door. If we're being specific about this, then we must be specific about the composer. We don't use period strings or winds, but the brass makes such a difference. When you've got four horns at the end of the *Rhenish* collectively being a 19th-century superhero, or whatever it is, they can play in a way that's strong and powerful; it's dark, but everything else clear – and it's not Hollywood in the sound. It's brilliant. They love that. What I'm so pleased about is that the Schumann feels like a complete follow-on from Berlioz. And in my mind I must have planned it somewhere.'

The regular old chestnut about Schumann is that he couldn't orchestrate. Ticciati comes at it from another angle. 'The orchestration is crazy, I know, but it's also so controlled in his thought, and the palette is so extraordinary. And I think when you get to a Schumann score, the first reaction is not to go

"What is all that?" but "What does he want?" and "What's important here?" There are some doublings, wind chorales, this thick tenor texture and I just completely go back to his piano-writing where he's

wanting counterpoint and a real sense of structure in the hands, and particularly from the thumbs. And you can hear it – think of that F sharp major Romance where it's all in the thumbs, the melody and everything else. Then think about balancing the orchestra like a pianist. I suppose Schumann must have said to himself, "My mind has escaped the piano: I need to write for the orchestra".'

And once you've embraced this piano-centric approach, you need to grapple with the style. 'It's then about how you apply the instruments. Also having an awareness of style or knowing what's going on in the 19th century in terms of how composers are dealing with certain accents. You know you have a *sforzando*, a *forte-piano*, you have a hat, a hat on its head. I sound like a scientist! But it's important to look at it first and then read his letters about Clara being the shrine and he the pilgrim and he's walking to her – and you can bring all the romance to it. But you have to be so clinical in understanding the structure, the harmony and exactly what he's written. I think bringing a lot of choices to it is important. And there are a *lot* of choices. All these crazy theorists of the 19th century talking about orchestras and the development of sound, and in the middle of it is this one voice. Then later you've got Dvořák, another voice with a completely different set of rules for accents. And what's so hard is finding a colour and a style for composers in the 19th century that's truthful.'

The Schumann symphonic cycle is an intriguing one, partly because though they're numbered 1-4, they were composed (and recomposed) in a different order: No 1, No 4 (first version), No 2, No 3 and then No 4 (recomposed: Ticciati plays this one). 'No 4, the revision, is probably the first time in

'Schumann's Fourth is probably the only time in history that a composer has revised a piece in his most depressed period'



Committed: still only 32, Robin Ticciati is already in his sixth season with the SCO

history that someone has revised a piece in his most depressed period as a composer – he was just so close to suicide – and it becomes this weighty, thick, doubled-up symphony with extra brass. I suppose in No 2 he's working out the Florestan and Eusebius duality, these two creatures within himself. It's almost as if both of them are reconciled at the end. And there's that hymn, that joy at the end that feels like a triumph. I find No 3, the last symphony, quite elusive. You've got that fourth movement where Clara is going 'You can't write that! You can't put that in!' It's the most astonishing movement. Then at the end there's this *Lebhaft* – it almost feels like a coda to a life.'

Alongside his work with the SCO and at Glyndebourne, Ticciati is in great demand as a guest conductor (he also holds that role, officially, with the Bamberg Symphony, one of Germany's most exciting ensembles), and he's recently changed his approach to working with orchestras around the world. 'Something that I'm doing now, and which takes yonks, is I'm doing my own parts. I've realised that you can't make orchestral musicians into librarians. If you've got ideas that go beyond *pianos*, *fortes* and "Let's get this together", you've got to put that in the parts. That's about a style – not so that it becomes too Ordnance Survey but so they can see it and then you can take, say, 10 bars and rehearse music rather than isolated librarian notes. So I'm finding a way of transferring my style and my real vision towards a piece to every orchestra I get to conduct. And of course it's about inheriting a certain sound. You don't try and make the Bamberg play like the SCO

but actually when you get so obsessed by a certain way of a composer dancing, shifting, being, you want some markings in the parts – you have to do your bowings. Logistically it's a complete nightmare but it's an amazing way of seeing what orchestral musicians see. We conductors are so used to seeing a full score – we're seeing the finished painting – and they've got only one line and their ears. It's really been fascinating and it's something that I'll just have to carry on. It's also a beautiful way of talking less because everyone knows they're your parts, you know they are, so it's just more efficient.'

Ticciati's other challenge is connecting with the Edinburgh audience and also seeing through the plans for a bespoke new concert hall for his orchestra. 'The orchestra now knows how I'm trying to work and how I want to show certain pieces with this ensemble. I haven't yet found a way of making the Edinburgh public go "This is a concert we simply have to go to" en masse – it's about the people living in Edinburgh feeling that this is *their* orchestra. And I do think that the plan for a new concert hall for us is going to be really important. To put it very crudely, you look at all these orchestras around the world that have these enormous halls, and you feel for them having to fill them. I think that, for the Edinburgh public, we need somewhere where we can grow from what we're already doing. From an orchestral point of view the front of a note will always be something in any hall, but when you can play with the end of a note in an acoustic that's so sensitive it then develops the orchestra, it develops the players' way of hearing and playing.'

Ticciati adds that, of course, having to play in a not-so-good hall means you have to play in a way that accommodates the acoustic – and that your playing can improve in this way, too. 'But,' he says with enthusiasm, 'I love this idea of things coming together and that, if the hall's on a university site, students will be straight in there – and also that the management will be there with the orchestra. The SCO cannot warm up before a concert backstage at the Queen's Hall – the reason why they have to be on stage is that there is no space backstage. And even that tiny aesthetic point makes a difference. The audience sits down. The orchestra comes in. Silence. An A from the oboe. The beginning. I think that's a different experience.'

► To read Gramophone's review of Ticciati's Schumann, turn to page 52

TICCIATI IN ROMANTIC REPERTOIRE

A quartet of Ticciati recordings from Berlioz to Brahms



Berlioz
Symphonie
fantastique
Scottish CO
Linn 

CKD400 (5/12)

'The clarity, coordination and spectrum of colour in the orchestra are spot-on for Berlioz.'



Wagner
Siegfried Idyll
SCO / Charles
Mackerras; Joseph
Swensen; Ticciati
Linn 

CKD540 (5/12)

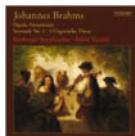
Ticciati joins SCO conductors with Wagner's mini tone-poem in this 40th-anniversary programme.



Berlioz
Les nuits d'été, etc
Karen Cargill mez
Scottish CO
Linn 

CKD421 (5/13)

'One of the striking facets of his conducting is the clarity and details that spring from the score.'



Brahms
Haydn Variations.
Serenade No 1, etc
Bamberg SO
Tudor 

TUDOR7183 (1/12)

'The performances of the Serenade or Variations give more or less unalloyed pleasure.'

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THE SHORTLIST

Our panel of expert critics have voted on the many hundreds of recordings we considered for this year's Awards, and we can now reveal the top three in each category. On August 27 at gramophone.co.uk we'll announce the winners in each category, then on September 17 we'll reveal the Recording of the Year. But for now, enjoy exploring the very best from an impressively strong year of releases.

BAROQUE INSTRUMENTAL

- **CPE Bach** 'Württemberg' Sonatas
Mahan Esfahani *hpd*
- **JS Bach** Brandenburg Concertos
Dunedin Consort / John Butt
- **Corelli** 'The Complete Concerti grossi'
Gli Incogniti / Amandine Beyer *vn*



Hyperion **F**
CDA67995 (2/14)



Linn **M ②**
CKD430 (A/13)



Zig-Zag Territoires **M ②**
ZZT327 (2/14)

BAROQUE VOCAL

- **CPE Bach** Magnificat; Heilig ist Gott
Soloists; RIAS Chamber Choir; Akademie für
Alte Musik Berlin / Hans-Christoph Rademann
- **Handel** Serse
Soloists, Early Opera Company / Christian Curnyn
- **Rameau** Le Grand Théâtre de l'amour
Sabine Devieilhe *sop* Les Ambassadeurs /
Alexis Kossenko



Harmonia Mundi **F**
HMC90 2167 (4/14)



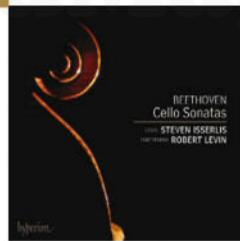
Chandos Chaconne **M ③**
CHAN0797 (9/13)



Erato **F**
934130-2 (2/14)

CHAMBER

- **Beethoven** Cello Sonatas
Steven Isserlis vc Robert Levin fp
- **Beethoven** Piano Trios – No 6, Op 70 No 2; No 7, 'Archduke', Op 97 **Isabelle Faust** vn
Jean-Guihen Queyras vc Alexander Melnikov fp
- **Schubert** String Quartet No 14, 'Death and the Maiden'. String Quintet, D956
Pavel Haas Quartet with **Danjulo Ishizaka** vc



Hyperion M ②
CDA67981/2 (2/14)



Harmonia Mundi F
HMC90 2125 (4/14)



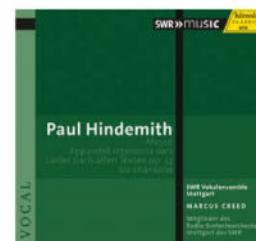
Supraphon M ②
SU4110-2 (10/13)

CHORAL

- **Beethoven** Missa solemnis
Soloists; Monteverdi Choir; Orchestra Révolutionnaire et Romantique / Sir John Eliot Gardiner
- **Hindemith** Choral Works
SWR Vocal Ensemble, Stuttgart / Marcus Creed
- **Mozart** Requiem
Soloists; Dunedin Consort / John Butt



Soli Deo Gloria F
SDG718 (2/14)



Hanssler Classic F
CD93 295 (7/13)



Linn F
CKD449 (5/14)

CONCERTO

- **Bartók** Violin Concertos Nos 1 & 2
Isabelle Faust vn **Swedish RSO / Daniel Harding**
- **Prokofiev** Complete Piano Concertos
Jean-Efflam Bavouzet pf **BBC Philharmonic / Gianandrea Noseda**
- **Adès. Sibelius** Violin Concertos
Augustin Hadelich vn **RLPO / Hannu Lintu**



Harmonia Mundi F
HMC90 2146 (A/13)



Chandos M ②
CHAN10802 (3/14)



Avie F
AV2276 (4/14)

CONTEMPORARY

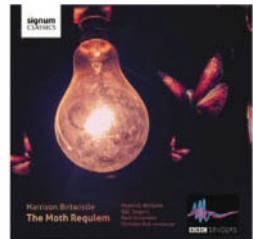
- **Anderson** Fantasias. The Crazed Moon. The Discovery of Heaven
LPO / Ryan Wigglesworth, Vladimir Jurowski
- **Benjamin** Written on Skin
Soloists; **Orchestra of the Royal Opera House / George Benjamin** Stage director **Katie Mitchell**
- **Birtwistle** The Moth Requiem, etc
BBC Singers; Nash Ensemble / Nicholas Kok



LPO F
LPO0074 (1/14)



Opus Arte F DVD
OA1125D (4/14)



Signum F
SIGCD368 (5/14)

EARLY MUSIC

- **Lassus** Lagrime di San Pietro
Gallicantus / Gabriel Crouch
- **Marenzio** Primo libro di madrigali
La Compagnia del Madrigale
- **Taverner** Missa Gloria Tibi Trinitas. Magnificats
The Tallis Scholars / Peter Phillips



Signum F
SIGCD339 (12/13)



Glossa F
GCD922802 (10/13)



Gimell F
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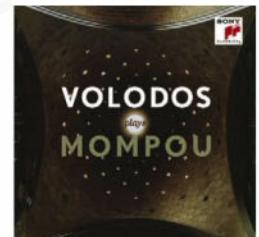
- **Beethoven** The Late Piano Sonatas (Nos 28-32)
Igor Levit pf
- **Busoni** Late Piano Music
Marc-André Hamelin pf
- **Mompou** Piano Works
Arcadi Volodos pf



Sony Classical (B) ②
88883 70387-2 (11/13)



Hyperion (F) ③
CDA67951/3 (11/13)



Sony Classical (F)
88765 43326-2 (8/13)

OPERA

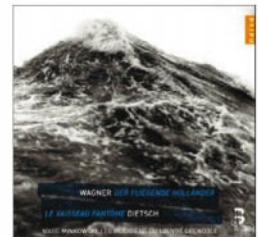
- **Berlioz** Les Troyens
Soloists; Chorus and Orch of the Royal Opera House / Antonio Pappano Stage director **David McVicar**
- **Ravel** L'heure espagnole. L'enfant et les sortilèges
Soloists; Glyndebourne Chorus; LPO / Kazushi Ono
Stage director **Laurent Pelly**
- **Wagner** Der fliegende Holländer **Dietsch** Le vaisseau fantôme **Soloists; Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir; Les Musiciens du Louvre / Marc Minkowski**



Opus Arte (F) ② DVD
OA1097D (1/14)



Fra Musica (F) DVD
FRA008 (11/13)



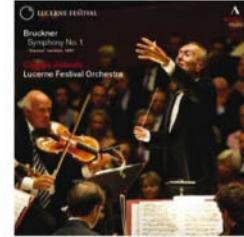
Naïve (B) ④
V5349 (4/14)

ORCHESTRAL

- **Brahms** Symphonies Nos 1-4
Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra / Riccardo Chailly
- **Bruckner** Symphony No 1
Lucerne Festival Orchestra / Claudio Abbado
- **Shostakovich** Symphony No 4
Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra / Vasily Petrenko



Decca (M) ③
478 5344DH3 (10/13)



Accentus (F)
ACC30274 (11/13)



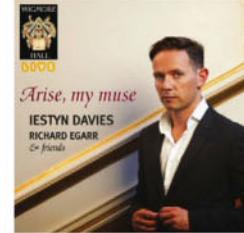
Naxos (B)
8 573188 (11/13)

RECITAL

- **'Che puro ciel'** The Rise of Classical Opera
Bejun Mehta countertenor
Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin / René Jacobs
- **'Arise, my Muse'**
Iestyn Davies countertenor Richard Egarr hpd et al
- **'I viaggi di Faustina'**
Roberta Invernizzi soprano I Turchini / Antonio Florio



Harmonia Mundi (F)
HMC90 2172 (2/14)



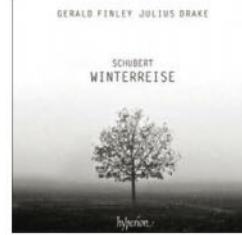
Wigmore Hall Live (M)
WHLIVE0065 (5/14)



Glossa (F)
GCD922606 (7/13)

SOLO VOCAL

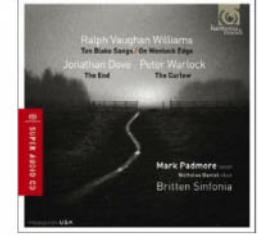
- **Schubert** Winterreise
Gerald Finley baritone Julius Drake pf
- **Schubert** Winterreise
Jonas Kaufmann tenor Helmut Deutsch pf
- **Vaughan Williams** On Wenlock Edge
Dove The End Warlock The Curlew
Mark Padmore tenor Nicholas Daniel ob Huw Watkins pf
Britten Sinfonia / Jacqueline Shave vn



Hyperion (F)
CDA68034 (4/14)



Sony Classical (F)
88883 79565-2 (5/14)



Harmonia Mundi (F)
HMU80 7566 (11/13)

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SEASON PREVIEW 2014-15

Our comprehensive guide to the new concert season, featuring the best live classical music events and opera productions from across the UK, Europe and North America

UNITED KINGDOM

BBC National Orchestra of Wales

Under the new Artistic Directorship of Michael Garvey, the season begins with Strauss's *Four Last Songs* sung by Ann Petersen and closes with Mahler's Second Symphony featuring soloists Klara Ek and Jennifer Johnston under Principal Conductor Thomas Søndergård. Further highlights include Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius*, new works by B Tommy Andersson and Mark Bowden, and a St David's Day appearance by Bryn Terfel.

bbc.co.uk/now

BBC Philharmonic

First up at the Bridgewater Hall is Beethoven's Ninth Symphony,

with further Beethoven offerings including the Violin Concerto in D, a full performance of *Egmont*, the Emperor Piano Concerto, and a concert performance of *Fidelio*. The season finishes with John Storgårds conducting a Nielsen symphony cycle for Nielsen Year.

bbc.co.uk/philharmonic

BBC Scottish SO

Chief Conductor Donald Runnicles celebrates his 60th birthday this year with a performance of Beethoven's Symphony No 9. Elsewhere he conducts three fragments from Berg's *Wozzeck*, Sibelius's Symphony No 7, and Shostakovich's Symphonies Nos 10

and 15. Further conductors include Thomas Dausgaard and Matthias Pintscher, while other artists include violinists Nicola Benedetti and Alina Pogostkina, pianist Steven Osborne, and mezzo-soprano Alice Coote.

bbc.co.uk/bbcso

Bournemouth SO

Kirill Karabits completes his survey of Prokofiev's symphonies, conducting the First, Fourth, and Sixth. Other repertoire being covered this season includes Shostakovich's Fifth and Bruckner's Seventh Symphonies. The First World War centenary, meanwhile, brings a performance of Elgar's *For the Fallen*, and music by Finzi, Butterworth and Cecil Coles. And Artist-in-Residence Sunwook Kim gives two piano performances.

bsolive.com

City of Birmingham SO

In his final season as Music Director, Andris Nelsons conducts Wagner's *Parsifal*. Other highlights include Beethoven's nine symphonies, a concert celebrating the centenary of Andrzej Panufnik's birth, UK premieres of works by Eriks Ešenvalds, James MacMillan and Mark-Anthony Turnage and - continuing the countdown to the CBSO's 2020 centenary - music from 1914 and 1915 by Sibelius and Elgar among others.

cbsoco.uk

Britten Sinfonia

The season begins with the world premiere of John Tavener's last completed concert work, *Flood of Beauty*. Other highlights include a performance of four dance works set to music and conducted by Thomas Adès, an exploration of American music featuring mezzo-soprano Sarah Connolly, two concerts

showcasing the soprano Barbara Hannigan and the world premiere of Nico Muhly's *Sentences*, based on the life of Alan Turing.

brittensinfonia.com

English National Opera

The season opens with David Alden's new production of Verdi's *Otello*. Other new stagings include Puccini's *The Girl of the Golden West*, directed by Richard Jones, and Wagner's *The Mastersingers of Nuremberg*. Revivals include Handel's *Xerxes* featuring Alice Coote, Puccini's *La bohème* and Peter Konwitschny's take on Verdi's *La traviata*. There's also the staged world premiere of John Adams's *The Gospel According to the Other Mary*, and a new retelling of Purcell's *The Indian Queen* devised by director Peter Sellars.

eno.org

English Touring Opera

English Touring Opera launches its season with Cal McCrystal's production of Haydn's comedy *Life on the Moon*, conducted by Christopher Bucknall. Other autumn offerings include Handel's *Ottone*, directed by James Conway and conducted by Jonathan Peter Kenny, who also conducts a concert of JS Bach's Advent Cantatas featuring soloists from the ETO as well as the Old Street Band and local choirs.

englishtouringopera.org.uk

Hallé

Artists including Viktoria Mullova, Alisa Weilerstein and Benjamin Grosvenor join the orchestra to perform all six of Shostakovich's concertos. Other highlights include Mahler's Fifth Symphony and Ravel's *Daphnis and Chloé* under Music Director Sir Mark Elder, as well as Haydn's *Nelson Mass*

FOCUS ON...

BBC Symphony Orchestra

Chief conductor Sakari Oramo conducts a Nielsen symphony cycle to celebrate the composer's 150th birthday. Elsewhere, three 'Total Immersion' days profile John Tavener, percussion music and Pierre Boulez in his 90th year. An opera series features Bartók's *Duke Bluebeard's Castle*, Smetana's *Dalibor* and the UK premiere of Unsuk Chin's *Alice in Wonderland*. And, celebrating their

90th birthday, the BBC Singers join in with a world premiere by Kevin Volans.

Further performers include Anne Sofie von Otter and Roderick Williams.

bbc.co.uk/symphonyorchestra

PRE-CONCERT LISTENING



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Celebrating Nielsen's 150th:
Sakari Oramo and the BBC SO



and Beethoven's *Missa solemnis*, featuring the Hallé Choir.

halle.co.uk

London Philharmonic Orchestra

An interesting programming strand here is 'Rachmaninov: Inside Out', featuring rarely performed works such as the opera *The Miserly Knight*. Also on the bill are new works by composers including Harrison Birtwistle, outgoing Composer-in-Residence Julian Anderson, and his successor, Magnus Lindberg. Further artists include Pierre-Laurent Aimard, Barbara Hannigan, Marin Alsop and Robin Ticciati, making his LPO debut at the Royal Festival Hall.

lpo.org.uk

London Sinfonietta

Contributing to Kings Place's 'Chamber Classics Unwrapped' series, the Sinfonietta performs Schoenberg's *Verklärte Nacht*, with further highlights including a performance of *An Index of Metals* - a multimedia piece - by the late Italian composer Fausto Romitelli, and a concert to celebrate Harrison Birtwistle's 80th birthday.

londonsinfonietta.org.uk

London Symphony Orchestra

In his final complete season as Principal Conductor, Valery Gergiev explores repertoire from his Russian homeland, beginning with a concert including Tishchenko's *Dante Symphony No 1* ('Among the Living'). Other programming themes include 'Musical Alchemists: Journeys with Great Conductors', featuring Bernard Haitink, Sir Simon Rattle and André Previn, and an international violin festival featuring performers including Leonidas Kavakos and Anne-Sophie Mutter.

lso.co.uk

Manchester Camerata

'UpClose', the orchestra's series of gigs in unusual Manchester venues, begins with a collaboration between the Manchester Literature Festival and guitarist Bill Ryder-Jones, and continues with a performance from Lithuanian accordionist Martynas Levickis. Further highlights include Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons* featuring violinist Nicola Benedetti, and a Mozart symphony series under Music Director Gábor Takács-Nagy.

manchestercamerata.co.uk

Royal Northern Sinfonia

Incoming Music Director Lars Vogt launches Sage Gateshead's 10th birthday season with a Beethoven and Brahms programme. Among the artists performing this season are Paul Lewis, who performs Brahms's Piano Concerto No 1; Laurence Cummings, who conducts a series of Bach concerts; and Julian Bliss, who performs Nielsen's Clarinet Concerto to mark the 150th anniversary of the composer's birth. A Beethoven symphony cycle runs alongside.

sagegateshead.com/about-us/northern-sinfonia

Opera North

The season boasts new stagings of Verdi's *La traviata*, Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*, the company's first production of Monteverdi's *The Coronation of Poppea* and Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi*, presented with a revival of Falla's *La vida breve*. There's also a revival of Smetana's *The Bartered Bride*, and a concert staging of Wagner's *The Flying Dutchman*.

operanorth.co.uk

Philharmonia Orchestra

Under principal conductor Esa-Pekka Salonen, the orchestra launches the season, with Berlioz's *Grande Messe des morts*. Further highlights include: 'City of Light', an exploration of Paris's cultural history between 1900 and 1950; 'The Mighty Five', an examination of Russian nationalism in the late 19th century; a Nielsen cycle; and concerts celebrating Sibelius's 150th anniversary, conducted by Vladimir Ashkenazy.

philharmonia.co.uk

Royal Liverpool PO

Chief Conductor Vasily Petrenko conducts the world premiere of James Horner's Double Concerto for Violin and Cello in the newly refurbished Liverpool Philharmonic Hall. There are also further new works from James MacMillan, Tan Dun, Michael Torke, Graham Fitkin and Nico Muhly. In 2015 the orchestra celebrates Tchaikovsky's 175th and Sibelius's 150th anniversaries, as well as its own 175th birthday. This year's Artists-in-Residence are Paul Lewis and Giovanni Sollima while other performers include violinists Alina Ibragimova and Vilde Frang.

liverpoolphil.com

FOCUS ON...

Scottish Chamber Orchestra

Principal Conductor Robin Ticciati opens with Mahler's Symphony No 4, showcasing the mezzo-soprano Karen Cargill, who returns for Mahler's *Kindertotenlieder* and *Das Lied von der Erde*. Elsewhere the orchestra presents the world premieres of works by Toshio Hosokawa and John McLeod, and the UK premieres of Hosokawa's *Meditation* and Swedish composer Rolf Martinsson's *Garden*

of *Devotion*. Artists include Mitsuko Uchida, Elisabeth Leonskaja and Christian Tetzlaff.

sco.org.uk

PRE-CONCERT LISTENING

Mahler Das Lied von der Erde
Alice Coote mezzosoprano
Burkhard Fritz piano
ten Netherlands
Philharmonic / Marc Albrecht
Pentatone PTC518 6502 (12/13)



Embracing the old and the new: the SCO's Principal Conductor Robin Ticciati

Royal Opera House

New productions include Verdi's *I due Foscari* starring Plácido Domingo, Mozart's *Idomeneo* directed by Martin Kušej, Verdi's *Un ballo in maschera* featuring Joseph Calleja, Umberto Giordano's *Andrea Chénier*, directed by David McVicar, Kurt Weill's *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*, directed by John Fulljames, Karol Szymanowski's *Król Roger* directed by Kasper Holten, Rossini's *Guillaume Tell*, featuring Gerald Finley, and Monteverdi's *Orfeo* at the Roundhouse, staged by Michael Boyd.

roh.org.uk

Royal Scottish NO

Music Director Peter Oundjian continues his examination of American music, while Principal Guest Conductor Thomas Søndergård explores old and new Scandinavian repertoire. John Suchet presents a 'Hall of Fame' concert devoted to Beethoven, and the season concludes with a performance of Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius*, conducted by Oundjian. Artists include Nicola Benedetti, Kirill Gerstein and RSNO Conductor Emeritus Neeme Järvi.

rsno.org.uk

Scottish Opera

New productions include Rossini's *La Cenerentola* conducted by William Lacey, James MacMillan's *Inés de Castro* directed by Olivia Fuchs, Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice* directed by Ashley Page and Janáček's *Jenůfa* featuring Lee Bisset, while revivals include Verdi's *Il trovatore* and *Macbeth*.

scottishopera.org.uk

Ulster Orchestra

The season's opening concert boasts performances of Strauss's *Till Eulenspiegel*, Penderecki's *Three Chinese Songs* and Beethoven's Symphony No 9, under new Chief Conductor Rafael Payare. Later, Payare begins a three-year cycle of all the symphonies and concertos of Beethoven, Tchaikovsky, Mozart, Mendelssohn, Schumann, Haydn, Brahms and Dvořák.

ulsterorchestra.com

Welsh National Opera

The 2014-2015 season is launched with David Pountney's new production of Rossini's *Guillaume Tell*. Other new productions include Rossini's *Moses in Egypt* and Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*.

wno.org.uk



FOUR LAST SONGS

R. Strauss

Four Last Songs

B Tommy Andersson

The Garden of Delights

Sibelius

Symphony No 2

Thomas Søndergård
Conductor

Ann Petersen
Soprano

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bbc.co.uk/now

BBC National Orchestra of Wales



BBC Wales



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Naoko Yoshino – Harp

Karen Cargill – Mezzo Soprano

9 – 10 October
Edinburgh and Glasgow



HAYDN & MAHLER

KAREN CARGILL
Mezzo Soprano

Conducted by Robin Ticciati

HOSOKAWA

Meditation

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Blumine

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Symphony No 104 'London'

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St Andrews, Edinburgh, and Glasgow

SCOTTISH CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

www.sco.org.uk

EUROPE

Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Rome

The season launches with a performance of Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto No 2 from Evgeny Kissin under Principal Conductor Antonio Pappano. Other highlights include Liszt's Piano Concerto No 2 with Benjamin Grosvenor, a Prokofiev symphony cycle under Valery Gergiev, Eötvös's *Speaking Drums* conducted by the composer, and a concert performance of Verdi's *Aida* starring Jonas Kaufmann.

www.santacecilia.it

Bavarian RSO

On the bill this season is a concert performance of Tchaikovsky's *The Queen of Spades*, under Chief Conductor Mariss Jansons. Other highlights include Bruckner's Symphony No 6, Shostakovich's Symphonies Nos 4 and 15, Beethoven's *Missa solemnis* and Brahms's Violin Concerto with soloist Frank Peter Zimmerman. Other artists include Alice Sara Ott, Radu Lupu, Gustavo Dudamel, Barbara Hannigan and Bernard Haitink.

[br.de/radio/br-klassik/
symphonieorchester](http://br.de/radio/br-klassik/symphonieorchester)

Bavarian State Opera

The first new production this season is Janáček's *The Makropulos Case*, while others include Puccini's *Manon Lescaut*, Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Rossini's *Le Comte Ory*, Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande* and Richard Strauss's *Arabella*. The line-up of more than 40 operas also features a revival of Wagner's *Ring*.

bayerische.staatsoper.de

Bergen Philharmonic

In celebration of the orchestra's 250th birthday, there's a performance of Schoenberg's *Gurrelieder* under incoming Chief Conductor Edward Gardner. Elsewhere, Andrew Manze conducts the world premiere of Per Nørgård's Double Concerto for Violin, Cello and Orchestra; Neeme Järvi conducts Grieg's lesser-known repertoire; and there are concert performances of Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Verdi's *Aida* and scenes from Unsuk Chin's *Alice in Wonderland*. Other artists include Karita Mattila and Viktoria Mullova.

harmonien.no

PHOTOGRAPHY: MICHAEL PATRICK O'LEARY/DG

Berlin Philharmonic

Among the highlights of the new season are performances of Brahms's, Schumann's and Sibelius's complete symphonies, a birthday concert for composer and conductor Peter Eötvös and the season opener, Stravinsky's *The Firebird*, performed under the baton of Chief Conductor Sir Simon Rattle. Guest artists include Gustavo Dudamel, Emmanuelle Haïm, Riccardo Chailly, Martha Argerich, Yuja Wang, Frank Peter Zimmermann, Isabelle Faust and Artist-in-Residence Christian Tetzlaff.

berliner-philharmoniker.de

Budapest Festival Orchestra

On the bill is a performance of Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* under the baton of the orchestra's founder Iván Fischer, who, elsewhere, guides the orchestra through a Stravinsky marathon day, pivotal works by Brahms and Mahler and a couple of 'surprise' concerts. Guest artists include the conductors Mikhail Pletnev and Robin Ticciati, violinist Pinchas Zukerman, mezzo-soprano Anna Caterina Antonacci and pianist David Fray.

bfz.hu

Czech Philharmonic Orchestra

Highlights of Jiří Bělohlávek's third season as Music Director include Lars Vogt as soloist in Mozart's Piano Concerto No 27, Matthias Goerne performing Mahler's *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, Jean-Yves Thibaudet performing Liszt's Piano Concerto No 2, Christoph Eschenbach conducting Prokofiev's Symphony No 1, Julia Fischer playing Martinů's Violin Concerto No 2, and a performance of Mahler's Symphony No 2 under Bělohlávek.

ceskafilharmonie.cz

Deutsche Oper Berlin

This year begins with a new production of Xenakis's *Oresteia* mounted in the Deutsche Oper's multi-storey car park. The other eight new productions include Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*, Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia*, Berlioz's *Roméo et Juliette*, Gounod's *Faust* and Rolando Villazón's production of Puccini's *La rondine*.

deutscheoperberlin.de

Gewandhaus Orchestra, Leipzig

Season-openers include Mahler's Symphony No 3 under Alan Gilbert and a Mendelssohn concert directed by Marc Minkowski, including the Violin Concerto with Sergey Khachaturyan. Elsewhere Music Director Riccardo Chailly conducts Beethoven's Violin Concerto featuring Nikolaj Znaider, and Semyon Bychkov conducts Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto No 2 with soloist Kirill Gerstein.

gewandhaus.de

Luxembourg Philharmonic

Music Director Emmanuel Krivine opens with Ravel's Piano Concerto for the Left Hand with soloist Jean-Efflam Bavouzet. Strauss, Scriabin and Bizet are this year's 'in-focus' composers. The 'Adventure' series provides concerts focusing on Spain, Luxembourg, China and Portugal while artists include Alisa Weilerstein, Hilary Hahn, Sergey Khachaturyan, Gil Shaham, François-Frédéric Guy, Matthias Goerne, Nikolaj Znaider, Ton Koopman and Jiří Bělohlávek.

opl.lu

Mariinsky Theatre, St Petersburg

The season opens with Verdi's *La traviata* under Music Director

Valery Gergiev, who within the first month also conducts Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*, Prokofiev's *The Love for Three Oranges*, a concert performance of Strauss's *Salomé*, and two further works by Verdi: *Aida* and *Otello*. Other operas include Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*, Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov*, and Shchedrin's *The Lefthander*.

marinsky.ru

Munich Philharmonic

The recent death of Principal Conductor Lorin Maazel means that the Munich Philharmonic's season will require a great deal of last-minute rearrangement. Nonetheless, a highlight of the season is bound to be Puccini's *La fanciulla del West* featuring Ekaterina Metlova. Guest artists this season include Christian Tetzlaff, Leonidas Kavakos and Leif Ove Andnes.

mphil.de

Netherlands Opera

The season begins with Music Director Marc Albrecht and Stage Director Pierre Audi presenting Schoenberg's *Gurrelieder* in the style of music theatre. Other productions include Chabrier's *L'Étoile*, Wagner's *Lohengrin*, Sasha Waltz's production

FOCUS ON...**Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra**

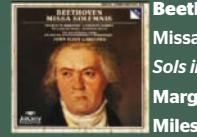
Clarinetist Martin Fröst is the orchestra's Artist-in-Residence, with other artists including Yefim Bronfman, Hilary Hahn and Gustavo Dudamel. Offerings include a celebration of Richard Strauss's 150th anniversary and repertoire ranging from Beethoven's *Missa solemnis* and Mahler's Symphony No 1 to works by Sofia Gubaidulina and the Danish composer Bent Sørensen.

Plus, there's live streaming in the digital concert hall.

gso.se

PRE-CONCERT LISTENING

Beethoven
Missa solemnis
Sols incl Charlotte Margiono, Alastair Miles; Monteverdi Choir, Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique / John Eliot Gardiner DG Archiv 429 779-2AH (3/91)



Caressing Korngold: Hilary Hahn plays the Violin Concerto with the GSO

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POOM PROMMACHART - piano

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ARTA ARNICANE - piano

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LAURA VAN DER HEIJDEN - cello

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WorldMacs.net

of Monteverdi's *Orfeo* and Rossini's *Il viaggio a Reims* featuring Eleonora Buratto. The season ends with Berg's *Lulu* conducted by Fabio Luisi.

dno.nl

Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra

The season opens with a programme including Strauss's *Ein Heldenleben* under Chief Conductor Vasily Petrenko. Another highlight is a concert of new and old Norwegian works. Further repertoire ranges from Scriabin's Symphony No 3 to John Adams's 'The Chairman Dances' from *Nixon in China* to Bent Sørensen's Trumpet Concerto. Among the artists are trumpeter Tine Thing Helseth, flautist Emmanuel Pahud and violinist James Ehnes.

oslofilharmonien.no

Rotterdam Philharmonic

Music Director Yannick Nézet-Séguin begins a Brahms cycle with the Third Symphony while David Afkham conducts Schubert's Great Symphony and collaborates with soloist Sergey Khachaturyan in Berg's Violin Concerto. Jiří Bělohlávek conducts Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto featuring Ray Chen as soloist, and there are also performances of Mahler's First, Second and Ninth Symphonies. Guest artists include Christian Tetzlaff and Hélène Grimaud.

rpho.nl

Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Amsterdam

Chief Conductor Mariss Jansons opens with Shostokovich's Symphony No 1, kick-starting a series of concerts celebrating 'the great symphonies'. Elsewhere, Artist-in-Residence Leonidas Kavakos performs Berg's Violin Concerto, Robin Ticciati conducts familiar and lesser-known French works, and featured contemporary composers include Tan Dun, Richard Rijnvors and Michel van der Aa who has created a new violin concerto for soloist Janine Jansen.

concertgebouworkest.nl

RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra, Dublin

Principal Conductor Alan Buribayev opens the season with a programme to celebrate the 150th birthdays of Richard Strauss (this year) and Sibelius (next year). Elsewhere,

the contemporary music series 'Horizons 2015' features world premieres from composers including Nicola LeFanu and Philip Hammond. Charles Hazlewood's 'Great Symphonies Close Up' series features works ranging from Haydn's Military Symphony to Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique*. There's also a mini-cycle of Shostakovich works.

[rte.ie/performinggroups](http:// rte.ie/performinggroups)

Russian National Orchestra

The season kicks off with the 'RNO Grand Festival'. Mikhail Pletnev exhibits his skills as conductor and pianist in Mozart's Piano Concerto No 8 among other works, and as composer with his Viola Concerto. Further performances include Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No 3 with soloist Simon Trpčeski, a concert performance of Rossini's *Tancredi*, and evenings of Paganini and Verdi. Conductors this season include Kirill Karabits and Paul Daniel.

russianarts.org/rno

St Petersburg Philharmonic

The season's opening weekend begins with Shostakovich's 10th Symphony and Rachmaninov's Third Piano Concerto with soloist Nikolai Lugansky under Artistic Director Yuri Temirkanov. Later, Alexander Dmitriev conducts Mozart's Piano Concerto No 20 with soloist Ekaterina Mechetina. The 'Music of Vienna' series features works by Mozart, Brahms and Schubert, while 'Dialogues' showcases new and rare works. A concert cycle of Tchaikovsky's works celebrates the composer's 175th birthday in 2015.

philharmonia.spb.ru/en

Semperoper Dresden

Ekkehard Klemm conducts the German premiere of Peter Ronnefeld's *Nachtausgabe*, commemorating the 50th anniversary of the composer's death, and Tomáš Netopil conducts Janaček's *The Cunning Little Vixen* in Frank Hilbrich's new staging. Other new productions include Humperdinck's *Königskinder*, Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*, and the world premiere of Lucia Ronchetti's *Mise en abyme*. There's also a focus on Strauss with revivals of *Capriccio*, *Daphne* and a new staging of *Arabella*.

semperoper.de

FOCUS ON...

Opéra National de Paris

The season opens with Verdi's *La traviata* under the musical direction of Dan Ettinger. Other productions include: Rossini's *Il barbiere di Siviglia*; Puccini's *Tosca* and *La bohème*; Cilea's *Adriana Lecouvreur*; Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*; and *Don Giovanni* with Erwin Schrott in the title-role; Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande* featuring Stéphane Degout, Paul Gay, Franz Josef Selig and Elena



Passionate: Benoît Jacquot's production of *La traviata* for Opéra National de Paris

Staatskapelle Dresden

Christian Thielemann launches his third season with Bruckner's Symphony No 9 and Composer-in-Residence Sofia Gubaidulina's Second Violin Concerto, performed by this year's Artist-in-Residence Gidon Kremer. Elsewhere Myung-Whun Chung conducts Rossini's *Stabat mater* and a Russian theme brings in works by Shostakovich, Tchaikovsky, Taneyev and Scriabin performed under Daniele Gatti and Vladimir Jurowski. Soloists this year include Renée Fleming and Nikolaj Znaider.

www.staatskapelle-dresden.de

Teatro alla Scala, Milan

The season opens with a new production of Beethoven's *Fidelio* conducted by Daniel Barenboim, who later performs Schubert's piano sonatas. Incoming Principal Conductor Riccardo Chailly opens a Puccini opera cycle, conducting a new production of *Turandot* and, later, conducts Verdi's *Requiem* as a new annual fixture. The 'Expo 2015' Festival of International Orchestras features ensembles from the Berlin Philharmonic to Concentus Musicus Wien. Further productions include Verdi's *Aida*,

Tsallagova; and other works by Humperdinck, Strauss and Gounod.

operadeparis.fr

PRE-CONCERT LISTENING

Debussy

Pelléas et Mélisande
Sols incl Rachel
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NORTH AMERICA

American Symphony Orchestra

Celebrating Strauss's 150th anniversary, Music Director Leon Botstein delves into the composer's marriage music, including the *Parergon on Symphonia Domestica*, performed by the pianist Mark Bebbington. Other offerings include: an exploration of composers' reactions to the catastrophes of the 20th century, such as Schnittke's *Nagasaki*; a concert of works discovered only after their composers' deaths; and a performance of Max Von Schillings's once hugely popular opera, *Mona Lisa*.

americansymphony.org

Baltimore Symphony Orchestra

Baltimore native Hilary Hahn opens the season, performing Beethoven's Violin Concerto. Later, Music Director Marin Alsop conducts works including Rachmaninov's Symphony No 1 and Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*. There are also works by Alsop's mentor Leonard Bernstein: his First Symphony, *Chichester Psalms* and the operetta *Candide*. Percussionist Colin Currie gives the US premiere of MacMillan's Percussion Concerto and Nicholas McGegan conducts an evening of Bach: JS, JC and CPE.

bsomusic.org

Boston Symphony Orchestra

Marcelo Lehninger opens with Brazilian Villa-Lobos's *Bachianas brasileiras* No 5 for soprano and cellos, and Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. Andris Nelson's first year as Music Director brings a concert of Wagner, Catalani and Respighi, plus a Scandinavian series including Sibelius and the world premiere of a BSO commission by Eriks Ešenvalds. Yo-Yo Ma performs Prokofiev, and Bernhard Haitink closes the season with Ravel and Brahms.

bso.org

Chicago Symphony Orchestra

In his fifth year as Music Director, Riccardo Muti guides the orchestra through the complete Tchaikovsky symphonies and four pieces by Scriabin. Further programming strands include 'Masterworks from Bach to Brahms', a series entitled 'From Berlioz to Boulez: Colour and Sensuality' and a 'Reveries and

Passions' festival conducted by Esa-Pekka Salonen featuring works by Ravel, Debussy and Messiaen. Among the artists performing are Yo-Yo Ma and Jean-Yves Thibaudet.

cso.org

Cleveland Orchestra

Music Director Franz Welser-Möst starts the season in October conducting Beethoven's Sixth Symphony, later offering us programmes of Chopin and Strauss, Bach's Mass in B minor and Mahler's Sixth Symphony. Special events include Boulez's 90th Birthday Salute and a performance of Strauss's opera *Daphne*. Artists this year include Lang Lang, Hilary Hahn, Alisa Weilerstein, Alina Ibragimova, Jean-Yves Thibaudet and Mitsuko Uchida.

clevelandorchestra.com

Dallas Symphony Orchestra

Itzhak Perlman joins the orchestra's Music Director Jaap van Zweden for an evening to celebrate 25 years in the Meyerson Symphony Center. The season starts and ends with Mahler, with other highlights including Hilary Hahn playing Beethoven's Violin Concerto and further appearances from Peter Serkin and Gil Shaham. There's also a performance of Bartók's *Duke Bluebeard's Castle* featuring Matthias Goerne, plus Dallas welcomes the inaugural Soluna: International Music and Arts Festival.

dallassymphony.com

Detroit Symphony Orchestra

'The Concerto in America' is the theme behind the new season, featuring works by Rachmaninov, Walton, Barber and Previn among others. Music Director Leonard Slatkin leads the orchestra through a Tchaikovsky symphony and concerto cycle in February and the season finale is a concert performance of Puccini's *Tosca*. Further artists include Neeme Järvi, Stephen Hough, and violinists Sarah Chang and Midori.

dso.org

Los Angeles Opera

The season opens with Verdi's *La traviata*, starring General Director Plácido Domingo and conducted by Music Director James Conlon, followed by a double-bill of Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* and Bartók's

Duke Bluebeard's Castle. Further programme highlights include a 'Figaro Trilogy' of Corigliano's *The Ghosts of Versailles*, Rossini's *Barber of Seville* and Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*, along with two offbeat pieces: David T Little and Royce Vavrek's *Dog Days* and the technicolour opera *Hercules vs Vampires* by Patrick Morganelli.

laopera.com

Los Angeles Philharmonic

An opening concert sees Itzhak Perlman join Music Director Gustavo Dudamel for an evening of John Williams. Dudamel follows this with Mahler's Fifth Symphony, the US premiere of David Lang's *man made* and other music ranging from Beethoven to Adams. Leif Ove Andsnes completes his three-year Beethoven cycle with

the Piano Concerto No 5 and there are performances to celebrate the 10th birthday of the Walt Disney Concert Hall organ 'Hurricane Mama'.

laphil.com

Lyric Opera of Chicago

In its 60th anniversary year, Lyric Opera offers new productions of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, Donizetti's *Anna Bolena* featuring Bryan Hymel, and Puccini's *Tosca*. Further highlights include Richard Strauss's *Capriccio*, Wagner's *Tannhäuser* with Gerald Finley, Weinberg's *The Passenger*, and two new works: Wlad Marhulets's *The Property* and José 'Pepe' Martinez and Leonard Foglia's *El pasado nunca se termina* ('The Past is Never Finished'). There's also an anniversary concert featuring Renée Fleming and Johan Botha.

lyricopera.org

FOCUS ON...

Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra

The opening performance of the Cincinnati Symphony's 120th season features Lang Lang performing Beethoven's Piano Concerto No 1 under Music Director Louis Langrée who, later in the year, also presents works by Mozart, Chopin and Tchaikovsky. Other highlights include John Adams conducting his own *Scheherazade No 2*, Khatia Buniashvili performing Liszt's Piano

Concerto No 2 coupled with Nielsen's *Aladdin Suite*, and performances by Joshua Bell and Martin Fröst.

cincinnatisymphony.org

PRE-CONCERT LISTENING

Beethoven
Piano Concertos Nos 1 & 4
Lang Lang pf
Paris Orchestra /
Christoph Eschenbach
DG 477 6719 (10/07)



Force of nature: Lang Lang plays Beethoven's First Piano Concerto in Cincinnati



London Symphony Orchestra
LSO St Luke's



Barnstorming technique
and musicality.

The Guardian
on Khatia Buniatishvili (6 Nov)

BBC Radio 3 Lunchtime Concerts Autumn 2014 at LSO St Luke's Old Street, EC1V

YOUNG PIANISTS

Thu 2 Oct 2014 1pm
LISE DE LA SALLE

Brahms Theme and Variations in D minor (arr from String Sextet No 1)
Brahms Two Rhapsodies Op 79
Ravel Gaspard de la nuit

Thu 6 Nov 2014 1pm
KATIA BUNIATISHVILI

Bach Sheep May Safely Graze
Mendelssohn Song Without Words Op 67 No 2
Chopin Étude Op 25 No 7
Trad arr Buniatishvili
Vaguiorko ma
Arvo Pärt Für Alina
Mussorgsky
Pictures at an Exhibition

Thu 13 Nov 2014 1pm
FEDERICO COLLI

Beethoven Piano Sonata in A-flat major Op 26
Schubert Four Impromptus D935

Thu 20 Nov 2014 1pm
ALICE SARA OTT

Beethoven Piano Sonata in D minor Op 31 No 2 ('The Tempest')
Liszt Paganini Études

NASH ENSEMBLE

Thu 9 Oct 2014 1pm

Borodin String Sextet in D minor
Stravinsky Three Pieces for String Quartet
Tchaikovsky Souvenir de Florence

Thu 16 Oct 2014 1pm

Bruckner Adagio from String Quintet in F major
Brahms String Sextet No 1 in B-flat major Op 18

Thu 23 Oct 2014 1pm

Martinů String Sextet
Krásá Tanec for String Trio
Dvořák String Sextet in A major Op 48

Thu 30 Oct 2014 1pm

Bruch String Quintet in E-flat major
Beethoven String Quintet in C major Op 29

For a full season lunchtime concert guide email info@lso.co.uk

Spring dates for your diary ...

NATALIE CLEIN AND FRIENDS

5, 12, 19 & 26 Feb 2015

HAYDN PLUS ONE

5, 12, 19 & 26 Mar 2015

VIOLIN RECITALS

21 May; 11, 18 & 25 Jun 2015

FOCUS ON...

San Francisco Symphony

In his 20th season with the orchestra, Music Director Michael Tilson Thomas celebrates his 70th birthday with a performance of Liszt's *Hexameron* for six pianists and orchestra. In addition, a three-week Beethoven Festival includes such works as *Missa solemnis* and *Fidelio*; 'The American Sound' series highlights American composers, including John Adams and his son Samuel Carl Adams; and a Violin Concerto exploration includes Gil Shaham playing Mozart and Prokofiev, Anne-Sophie Mutter performing Brahms and Joshua Bell playing Beethoven.

sfsymphony.org

PRE-CONCERT LISTENING

Liszt Hexameron
Leslie Howard pf
Budapest Symphony Orchestra / Karl Anton Rickenbacher

Hyperion ② CDA67401/2 (4/99)

Celebration: Michael Tilson Thomas hits 70 with a special birthday concert



Metropolitan Opera, New York

Twenty-four operas grace the stage this year, with six new productions including John Adams's *The Death of Klinghoffer*, Léhar's *The Merry Widow* and Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*, with which Music Director James Levine opens the season. Other highlights include Puccini's *La bohème* featuring Angela Gheorghiu, Verdi's *Macbeth* starring Anna Netrebko and Joseph Calleja, and Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel*. Conductors this season include Fabio Luisi, Marco Armiliato and Valery Gergiev.

metopera.org

Minnesota Orchestra

Music Director Osmo Vänskä opens the season with a concert starring soprano Renée Fleming. Highlights include a 'Shakespeare Winterfest' series, a 'Spirit and Spring' orchestral series featuring works by Stravinsky, Vaughan Williams and Mahler, and two programmes of music by American composers. Vänskä conducts Sibelius's Symphonies Nos 3, 6 and 7, and there's also a three-week celebration of Richard Strauss to mark his 150th birthday year.

minnesotaorchestra.org

National Symphony Orchestra

Washington's NSO season kicks off with a French-inspired programme under Music Director Christoph Eschenbach and Principal Pops

Conductor Steven Reineke. The orchestra presents a celebration of Tchaikovsky masterworks and embarks on an exploration of Mahler, with performances of his Fifth and Ninth Symphonies. Helmuth Rilling conducts an all-Bach programme, and Garrick Ohlsson performs Busoni's Piano Concerto. Artists this year include violinist Midori and pianist Angela Hewitt.

kennedy-center.org/nso

New York Philharmonic

Music Director Alan Gilbert opens with the music of Italian cinema, featuring soloists Joshua Bell, Josh Groban and Renée Fleming. Later, Gilbert conducts Verdi's Requiem with soloists Angela Meade and Eric Owens. Further highlights include: Artist-in-Residence violinist Lisa Batiashvili performing Brahms, Barber and Bach; the US premiere of a fully-staged production of Honegger's *Joan of Arc at the Stake*; and a two-week Dvořák festival.

nyphil.org

Philadelphia Orchestra

Yannick Nézet-Séguin launches his third season as Music Director with Mozart's Piano Concerto No 17 featuring pianist Lang Lang. Later Nézet-Séguin guides the orchestra through a 'St Petersburg Festival' and celebrates his 40th birthday with the '40:40' project



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bringing 40 compositions not performed in a Philadelphia Orchestra subscription concert in his lifetime. Other highlights include a month-long celebration of organ music and Bernstein's *Mass*, which forms the pinnacle of a five-season requiem cycle.

philorch.org

Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra

First up this season is violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter, in a gala performance featuring Bruch's Violin Concerto No 1 under Music Director Manfred Honeck. Among the other highlights are three weekends devoted to Beethoven's life and works. Artists include Yan Pascal Tortelier, Gabriela Montero and Hélène Grimaud. The season concludes with Liszt's Piano Concerto No 2 featuring pianist Yefim Bronfman, and Mahler's Symphony No 1.

pittsburghsymphony.org

San Francisco Opera

The season launches with a new production of Bellini's *Norma* conducted by Music Director Nicola Luisotti, who later takes up the baton for Verdi's *A Masked Ball*. Other new productions include *Susannah* with music and libretto by Carlisle Floyd, and Handel's *Partenope* starring Danielle de Niese. Additional highlights include the world premiere of Marco Tutino's *Two Women*, David

McVicar's new staging of Berlioz's *The Trojans* and two works by Puccini: *Tosca*, and John Caird's new production of *La bohème*.

sfopera.com

St Louis Symphony Orchestra

David Robertson celebrates his 10th season as Music Director with Verdi's *Aida* featuring Lucrezia Garcia in the title-role. There are three special composer spotlight evenings in which Cristian Macelaru conducts Tchaikovsky, Jun Märkl conducts Beethoven, and Nicholas McGegan conducts a programme of the Bach family. Further highlights include Bruch's Violin Concerto No 1 with soloist David Halen, which celebrates his 20th year as Concertmaster.

stlsymphony.org

Washington National Opera

Led by Artistic Director Francesca Zambello, the new season includes Daniel Catán's *Florencia in the Amazon*, Puccini's *La bohème*, Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmélites*, Wagner's *The Flying Dutchman* and Rossini's *Cinderella*. Other highlights include an evening with tenor Stephen Costello and soprano Ailyn Pérez (the husband-and-wife duo), premieres of three new 20-minute operas in concert performance, and Douglas Pew and Dara Weinberg's new hour-long opera, *Penny*.

kennedy-center.org/wno

OPUS ARTE

L'ITALIANA IN ALGERI

ROSSINI

Pesaro

Pesaro's new offering in 2013 was an off-the-wall production of Rossini's popular comedy presented as a Swinging Sixties, James Bond adventure, set in the desert oil fields of the North African coast.

ON DVD & BLU-RAY



DER FLIEGENDE HOLLÄNDER

WAGNER

Bayreuth Festival

Last year's revival of Jan Philipp Gloger's controversial 2012 production was greeted with huge acclaim. The production stars Samuel Youn, Ricarda Merbeth, and Franz-Josef Selig. Christian Thielemann conducts who arguably the greatest Wagnerian conductor of today.

ON DVD & BLU-RAY



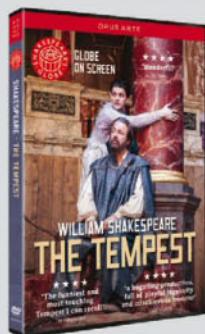
THE TEMPEST

SHAKESPEARE

Shakespeare's Globe

The Tempest is Shakespeare's late great masterpiece of forgiveness, generosity and enlightenment. Jeremy Herrin's production includes Olivier Award winner Roger Allam (Falstaff in *Henry IV* parts 1 & 2) as Prospero.

ON DVD



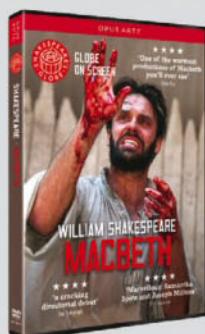
MACBETH

SHAKESPEARE

Shakespeare's Globe

From its mesmerising first moments to the last fulfilment of the witches' prophecy, Shakespeare's gripping account of the profoundest engagement with the forces of evil enthrals the imagination. This production employs Renaissance costumes and staging.

ON DVD



GRAMOPHONE Reviews

KEY TO SYMBOLS

- ➊ Reissue
- ➋ Historic
- ➌ Compact disc
(number of discs in set)
- ➍ Text(s) included
- ➎ translation(s) included
- ➏ Synopsis included

- ➐ subtitles included
- ➑ SACD (Super Audio CD)
- ➒ DVD Video
- ➓ Blu-ray
- ➔ LP
- ➕ Download only
- ➖ no longer available

- ➐ aas all available separately
- ➑ oas only available separately
- ➒ £10 and over
- ➓ £7.76 to £9.99
- ➔ £6.25 to £7.75
- ➕ £6.24 and below

(In box-sets, price is per disc)



Editor's Choice

Martin Cullingford's pick of the finest recordings reviewed in this issue



Gramophone Player

Hear a high-quality sample of the music online

Recording of the Month

Bryce Morrison reviews the latest disc from 'the most remarkable young pianist of our time'



Benjamin Grosvenor

'Dances'

Albéniz *Espana*, Op 165 – Tango No 2

Garr Godowsky JS Bach *Partita No 4*, BWV828

Chopin *Andante spianato* and *Grande Polonaise*

brillante, Op 22. *Polonaise No 5*, Op 44 M Gould

Boogie-Woogie Etude Granados *Valses poéticos*

Schulz-Evler *Arabesques* on Johann Strauss's

'By the Beautiful Blue Danube' Scriabin *Mazurkas*, Op 3 - No 4; No 6; No 9. *Valse*, Op 38

Benjamin Grosvenor pf

Decca ➐ 478 5334DH (81' • DDD)

Benjamin Grosvenor's selection, simply entitled 'Dances', is lovingly planned rather than random. Ranging from Bach to Morton Gould, there are subtle reminders that, even if Chopin does not follow Bach 'as the night the day', you still recall Chopin's love of Bach. Early Scriabin remembers Chopin, his *Mazurkas* written long before he developed or regressed into an obsessive mysticism. Chopin, too, was central to Granados's inspiration (his *Escenas románticas* end with a graceful bow and tribute to Chopin called 'Spianato'). Finally, the Schulz-Evler *Arabesques* on *The Blue Danube*, the Albeniz-Godowsky Tango and Morton Gould's *Boogie-Woogie Etude* – a free blossoming into a glorious liberation.

Having recently celebrated a disc largely devoted to one of Janáček's darkest utterances, it is with a spirit of uplift that I now find myself listening to performances that are carried forwards on an irresistible tide of youthful exuberance. With no need of the international competition circuit to lift or lower his career, Grosvenor



It is with a spirit of uplift that I find myself listening to performances that are carried on an irresistible tide of youthful exuberance'

bypasses that ever-controversial arena to give performance after performance of a surpassing brilliance and character. However hard the slog in the practice room (such dazzle and re-creation result from intense discipline), there is a sense of joyful release, of music-making free from all constraint.

Grosvenor's Bach (the Fourth Partita, the most substantial item on the disc) is a vivid contradiction of a quaint, long-held view that Bach was essentially an academic, once unaffectionately known as 'the old wig', who provided useful contrapuntal fodder for exams. Such views long ago toppled into absurdity and like, say, Schiff and Perahia (though with an entirely fresh

stance of his own), Grosvenor gives us Bach, our timeless contemporary. What drama and vitality he finds as he launches the Overture, what a spring – even swagger – in his step in the Courante, what unflagging but unforced brio in the final Gigue. And then you remember his Sarabande, where his pace and energy are resolved in a 'still small voice of calm'. Dry-as-dusts may rattle their sabres but, like Horowitz, who confounded the pundits with his crystalline Scarlatti, Grosvenor creates his own authenticity, revelling in music of an eternal ebullience and inwardness, and erasing all notion of faceless sobriety.

This is followed by a wide but relevant leap to Chopin. The Op 22 *Grande Polonaise* may pay tribute to Chopin's early concert-hall glitter (his opening salvo in the Etudes, Op 10, is a reworking of Bach's first Prelude, also in C major, from his '48') but even here Chopin can reflect his cherished memories. Grosvenor keeps everything smartly on the move (he is the least sentimental of pianists), spinning the composer's vocal line in the introductory *Andante spianato* with rare translucency and with decorations cascading like stardust. There is never a question of attention-seeking, of 'what can I do with this?'. Such things have no place in Grosvenor's lexicon and everything is as natural as breathing. Textures, too, are as light as air, after a commanding summons to the dance floor, and both here and in the more mature Op 44 Polonaise there is an almost skittish erasing of all possible opacity. Again, detail is as acute as ever, with flashing



Wonder and delight: Benjamin Grosvenor gives performances of surpassing brilliance and character

octaves complemented by a magically sensitive central Mazurka and a sinister close, suggesting a dark undertow to Chopin's all-Polish defiance (for Schumann the Polonaises were 'cannons buried in flowers').

Three Scriabin Mazurkas from his Op 3 remember Chopin with their characteristic

major-minor alternations, the Sixth with its gazelle-like leaps followed by the Fourth and Ninth, alive with an already distinctive voice. In Grosvenor's hands the A flat Valse becomes one of Scriabin's most intoxicating creations and so, too, do Granados's *Valses poéticos*. And while there is nothing so specific as the above-

mentioned term 'spianato', there is still a sense of a distant relation to Chopin.

Finally, the Schulz-Evler *Arabesques on The Blue Danube*, once described as 'sending fabulous spangles of sound spinning through the air' in its introduction, followed by Grosvenor's seemingly inborn elegance and sophistication in the waltz proper. The Albeniz-Godowsky Tango may be less sultry and insinuating than some (I have Cherkassky's winking and teasing magic in mind) but Grosvenor's cooler view is exquisite in its own entirely personal way. Then on to a fizzing finish in Morton Gould's *Boogie-Woogie Etude*, and a headlong charge with still enough colour and variety to bring even the most staid audience to its feet.

Benjamin Grosvenor may well be the most remarkable young pianist of our time. And for him, choosing from his already extensive repertoire music for future recordings will surely be a labour of love. Decca's sound is excellent and this is a disc to prompt wonder and delight in equal measure. 

Listening points Your guide to the disc's memorable moments

Track 7: Bach, Partita No 4, Gigue - opening to 0'50"

The opening of the Gigue from Bach's Fourth Partita provides a key example of how Grosvenor's youthful exuberance makes every bar spring to life.

Track 5: Bach, Partita No 4, Sarabande - opening to 0'50"

By way of contrast, the Sarabande from the same Partita finds Grosvenor able to change from high-octane vitality to playing of a rare poise and refinement.

Track 9: Chopin. Andante spianato and Grande Polonaise brillante, Op 22 - 7'16" to the end

Effortless elegance and brilliance bring Chopin's early-display Polonaise to a scintillating close.

Track 14: Scriabin, Valse in A flat, Op 38 - opening to 1'01"

Whether in free-floating whimsy or explosive energy, Grosvenor exhibits a total empathy with every facet of Scriabin's Waltz.

Track 24: Schulz-Evler, Arabesques on Johann Strauss's 'By the Beautiful Blue Danube' - from 1'07"

Bravura combines with finesse to make Grosvenor's opening pages of this virtuoso classic something to marvel at.

Track 26: Morton Gould, Boogie-Woogie Etude - complete

Finally, Morton Gould's showstopper *Boogie-Woogie Etude*, and yet another facet of Benjamin Grosvenor's wide-ranging gifts.



Visit the Gramophone Player at gramophone.co.uk to hear an excerpt from this issue's Recording of the Month

Orchestral



Peter Quantrill on Claudio Abbado's legacy on screen:

'Abbado discovered how to internalise his much-loved model of Furtwängler and make it sing for himself' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 43**



Philip Clark on a new Turangalîla recording from Helsinki:

'Lintu makes Messiaen's competing layers dance sensuously around one another'

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 48**

Beethoven

Piano Concerto No 5, 'Emperor', Op 73 – original version^a; solo piano version (arr Katsaris)

Cyprien Katsaris pf^a Academy of St Martin in the Fields / Sir Neville Marriner

Piano21 (P) P21 051N (76' • DDD)



This is a Beethoven Fifth with a difference. First we get it as you'd expect it, with Katsaris

taking the solo spot, aided and abetted by a sprightly Neville Marriner, 90 years young, and the ASMF, an ensemble he founded back in 1958, when Cyprien Katsaris was just seven. It was around this time that the pianist was getting to know Beethoven's Fifth Piano Concerto through Horowitz's recording with Fritz Reiner, a work which, so Katsaris recalls, had one shortcoming: that the piano never gets to play the orchestra's grand opening *tutti* theme. So he has put matters to rights by transcribing the concerto for solo piano. Katsaris is of course no stranger to transcribed Beethoven – his Teldec recordings of Liszt's arrangements of the symphonies still make for intriguing listening. His reading of the 'standard' concerto performance is at the no-nonsense end of the spectrum, with strength tending to be more in evidence than subtlety. If it's finesse you want as well as steel, Lewis, Uchida or Gilels are much better options.

Transcriptions can allow the listener to glimpse a much-loved work from a different perspective (Stravinsky's *Rite* is a good example). Here, I'm less sure about the benefits (apart from Katsaris finally getting his hands on that tune). He has a tendency to play at the limits of the piano's tone rather too often when attempting to convey the heft of Beethoven's *tutti*s. But more disturbing is some of the passagework, which is rather jerkily surmounted, particularly in the finale. And it's impossible for a keyboard instrument to recapture the sublime string scoring that opens the second movement, though

Katsaris does his best to emulate the double bass *pizzicatos* by slightly desynchronising his left hand. One for transcription nuts only. **Harriet Smith**

'Emperor' Conc – selected comparisons:

Gilels, Philib Orb, Ludwig

(11/57^a, 4/97) (TEST) SBT1095

Uchida, Bavarian RSO, Sanderling

(9/99^a) (PHIL) 475 6757PB3

Lewis, BBC SO, Bělohlávek

(9/10) (HARM) HMC90 2053/5

Bigham

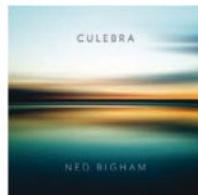
Culebra^a – Part 1 (IMRM); Part 2. *An Caisteach*^b. *Glenfinglas*^b. *Sail Mhor*^b. *Portsonachan*^b. *The Auld Hoosie*^c. *Caller Herrin*^c. *Will he no come back again*^c. *The 100 Pipers*^c. *The Rowan Tree*^c

^a**Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra;**

^b**Royal Scottish National Orchestra /**

^{ab}**Gregory Rose; Scottish Ensemble**

Aruna (P) ARUNACD001 (56' • DDD)



Ned Bigham is a Scottish composer new to me, who eschews serialism and dissonant modernity, although he does not shirk moments of dissonance. Yet his natural melodic writing immediately communicates and frequently moves the listener. His career has covered orchestral, ambient electronica and popular music. He studied composition at Trinity College of Music, including jazz arranging.

Since leaving Trinity, he has centred his career on writing for orchestra and, as we immediately discover here, he has a striking flair for subtle orchestral colouring. This is the release of his first 'classical' CD, music inspired by or derived from Scottish folk ballads. But the collection is planned and structured as a whole, and is framed by the title-piece, *Culebra*. This is in two sections, which are based on a rocking chorale, made up of two sets of memorable chords, which both echo and overlap each other, and move from *pianissimo* to climax, and then return to a feeling of peace. They are dedicated to the composer's late father

and are sensitively played by the Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra directed by Gregory Rose.

Four delightfully scored evocations of the Scottish Highlands are played by the Royal Scottish National Orchestra with the same conductor, and the equally engaging arrangements of a group of five Scottish ballads, written by the composer's Scottish ancestor, Lady Nairne, are given to the Scottish Ensemble. These include 'The Auld Hoosie', 'Caller Herrin' (with its cello soliloquy and *pizzicatos*) and the cheerful 'The 100 Pipers', with the solo fiddle sounding for all the world like bagpipes. The melancholy 'Will he no come back again' is given to the strings, like the meltingly lovely 'The Rowan Tree'.

Culebra is an island and wildlife sanctuary in Puerto Rico. Can any reader suggest why this was chosen as the title of this collection? No information is provided in the booklet. **Ivan March**

Borup-Jørgensen

'The Percussion Universe of Axel Borup-Jørgensen'

Solo, Op 88^a. *Music for Percussion and Viola*, Op 18^b. *La primavera*, Op 97^c. *Periphrasis*, Op 156^d. *Winter Music*, Op 113.1^e

^a**Michala Petri rec** ^b**Tim Frederiksen perc**

^c**Duo Crossfire; Danish National Symphony Orchestra Brass Quintet; Percurama /**

^d**Gert Mortensen ade perc** ^b**cond**

OUR Recordings (P) 6 220608 (73' • DDD/DSD)



Axel Borup-Jørgensen (1924–2012) will be a name unfamiliar to many, though this Danish composer left a substantial body of work and finds meaningful accommodation between mid-20th-century modernism and the aesthetic concerns of an earlier era. This disc of music for and featuring percussion touches on all the relevant bases – not least *Solo* (1979), where archetypal groupings of metal, skin and wood are drawn into a continuity so that differences

in timbre are outweighed by similarities of texture. Much the earliest piece here, *Music for Percussion and Viola* (1956) yields a rhythmic uniformity its composer was later to eschew, yet the gradual coalescing of opposites in a climactic processional is no less arresting for it.

The duo percussion medium is represented by *La primavera* (1982), the longest and also slowest-burning work, which, despite its fastidious blending of instruments and the visceral exchanges towards its close, is likely as much visual as aural in appeal. Not so *Periphrasis* (1997), in which the interplay with recorder is made meaningful through the separating of un-tuned and tuned percussion that ensures an unbroken arc of expressive intensity through to the close. An outcome no less audible in *Winter Music* (1984), except the brass quintet adds Varèse-like plangency to music whose ominous import is pointedly not made explicit.

Recorded with startling clarity and informatively annotated, this release is another triumph for Gert Mortensen and the formidable roster of musicians with whom he has collaborated on this project – so resulting in a memorable listening experience. **Richard Whitehouse**

Bruckner

Symphony No 2 (1877 version, ed Nowak)
Vienna Symphony Orchestra / Carlo Maria Giulini
Wiener Symphoniker © WS004 (59' • ADD)
Recorded 1974



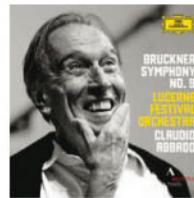
Over a dozen new recordings, not to mention an entirely new performing edition, of Bruckner's youthfully vibrant and at times painfully beautiful Second Symphony have appeared since this Giulini recording was made by EMI in Vienna in 1974. Yet, as Arnold Whittall wrote in these columns on the occasion of the performance's first CD reissue (Testament, 12/01), 'matters musical and fade to vanishing point given such communicative genius'. It was a view which echoed Deryck Cooke's opinion in December 1975: 'For once I'm inclined to ignore the question of versions – it's still Bruckner's Second Symphony, and sounding more maturely Bruckner than ever before'.

This is, indeed, one of the great Bruckner performances on record. Produced by Christopher Bishop and engineered by Christopher Parker, the original EMI recording was exemplary for its time. I had wondered whether this latest

release was of a live performance from the Vienna Symphony Orchestra's own archive. But, no, it is simply a reprint of the 1975 recording which, like the Testament, has been taken from EMI's original tapes. Paul Baily's 2001 transfer for Testament strikes me as having rather greater 'presence' than this newer German remastering. However, there is little that a small adjustment to the volume control won't put right. The booklet includes an interesting essay on Giulini by Robert Freund, a horn player in the orchestra between 1967 and 1982. **Richard Osborne**

Bruckner

Symphony No 9 (ed Nowak)
Lucerne Festival Orchestra / Claudio Abbado
DG © 479 3441GH (63' • DDD)
Recorded live at the Concert Hall
of KKL Lucerne, August 21-26, 2013



Most of the differences between this Bruckner Ninth Symphony, which was recorded in concert just five months before Claudio Abbado's death in January, and the rather less flexible version he made in 1996 with the Vienna Philharmonic (also live, and also for DG) are relatively subtle. I note near the very outset of the work a wind chord that on the original broadcast wasn't quite unanimous is now fairly tight, so I am assuming a limited amount of 'patching', though there are no audible edits.

The contrasting qualities of the two orchestras are brought to the fore around 12'13" into the first movement (11'28" on the VPO disc) – the interplay between winds and strings, which is more expressively drawn on the Lucerne disc. Also, there's added presence among the pulsing basses as the coda to the first movement builds. The blinding light suggested near the start of the *Adagio*, where brass choirs exchange declamatory fanfares (1'56"), is also clearer on the new disc. Then again, put on the start of either *Scherzo* and you could as well be listening to the same recording, such was Abbado's consistency.

I'd say that overall the new version is the more affectionately played, the earlier one bolder, with a more impressive yield of tonal power. Not so much, though, as Bernard Haitink with the LSO at the Barbican, a far broader reading than either of Abbado's, immensely impressive on every page, almost Celibidache-like in fact, though without the light and shade of my current digital favourite, Herbert Blomstedt with the Leipzig Gewandhaus

GRAMOPHONE Archive

Bruckner's Symphony No 2

Three recordings that came before Giulini's – and how Gramophone rated them



SEPTEMBER 1961

Bruckner Symphony No 2
Linz Bruckner Symphony
Orchestra / Georg Ludwig Jochum
Saga © XID5102/3 (two 12in • 42s)

The performance by the orchestra of Bruckner's home town has some roughnesses but in general seems to me very fine. This is just the sort of spacious playing Bruckner needs. It says on the disc that these recordings were 'first published in 1961' but the fact is that America could buy this Bruckner recording at least by 1952. These are not records for the 'hi-fi' specialists, and no one should expect a full, rich sound from these discs. But the quality, though poor by present-day standards, is quite good enough to allow you to get to know this really splendid music, and after all these are very cheap discs. **Roger Fiske**



MAY 1966

Bruckner Symphony No 2
Vienna Symphony Orchestra /
Volkmar Andreae

Philips © GL5846 (12in • 18s 6d)
Andreae's performance is slack in tempo, the *Scherzo* being particularly flabby, with some poor ensemble from the orchestra; and the recording is still far from good. To get any kind of full sound, one has to turn up the volume control to the point where the surface becomes obtrusive; and even then, while the quiet passages sound reasonably realistic, the *tutti* passages are badly congested. The version of the score is a curious mixture of sources. **Deryck Cooke**



MAY 1970

Bruckner Symphony No 2
Concertgebouw Orchestra /
Bernard Haitink

Philips © SAL3785 (45s)
Haitink bases this splendid new recording on the Haas edition. One result is that the slow movement is split over two sides but this is inevitable considering the greater length of the uncut version. The playing of the Concertgebouw Orchestra is altogether superb and Haitink's interpretation strikes the right balance between regard for the architectural grandeur of Bruckner's vision and the sense of awe and mystery that details of it inspire. The Philips record is excellently balanced and has splendid clarity of detail and plenty of range. **Robert Layton**

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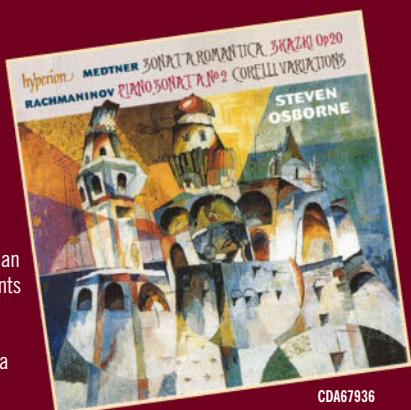
hyperion NEW RELEASES

NIKOLAI MEDTNER
SERGEI RACHMANINOV

Piano Sonatas

Steven Osborne has become increasingly admired for his performances and recordings of Russian Romantic piano music. Here he presents an impressive selection from two masters who lived and worked contemporaneously. Medtner's 'Sonata Romantica' is in its title and scope a manifesto for his art; Rachmaninov's Sonata in B flat minor needs no introduction.

STEVEN OSBORNE piano



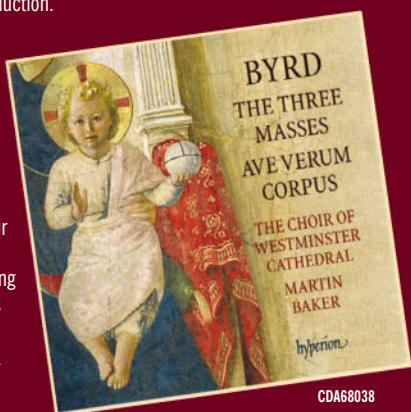
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WILLIAM BYRD

The Three Masses

A new recording of the most perfect of Tudor masterpieces, Byrd's three Mass-settings, from the cradle of their nineteenth-century rehabilitation. Westminster Cathedral Choir is enjoying a vintage period, and here we hear its trademark sound in all its glory.

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MARTIN BAKER conductor

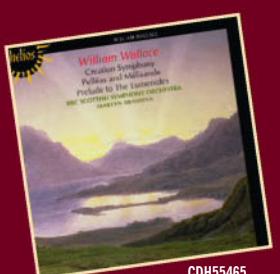


CDA68038

helios WILLIAM WALLACE
Creation Symphony

Prior to the making of this recording in 1997 it seems that no one had performed Wallace's *Creation Symphony* for nearly a hundred years and yet, in the history of the symphony in Britain, it is unprecedented in its scope and daring.

'Another Hyperion winner' (*Gramophone*)
BBC SCOTTISH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
MARTYN BRABBINS conductor



CDH55465

helios GEORGY CATOIRE
Piano Music

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MARC-ANDRÉ HAMELIN piano



CDH55425

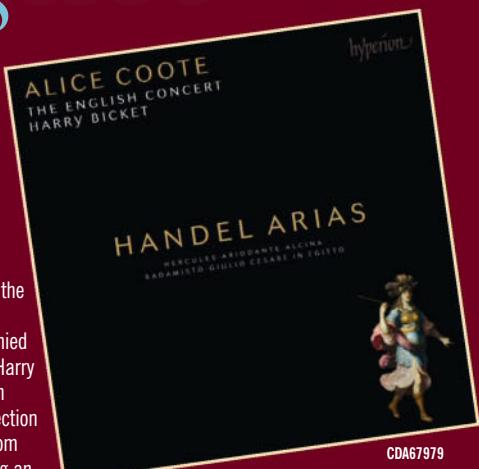


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HANDEL

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Alice Coote mezzo-soprano
The English Concert conductor

JOHANNES BRAHMS

The Complete Songs – 5

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CHRISTOPHER MALTMAN baritone
GRAHAM JOHNSON piano



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SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
ANDREW MANZE conductor



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ABBADO ON DVD

Peter Quantrill watches three filmed concerts including what was to prove one of the Italian maestro's final appearances



The full measure of him: Claudio Abbado and his Lucerne Festival Orchestra in 2012

For what proved to be his last pair of concert programmes, Claudio Abbado placed in telling combination five Austro-German tragedies: an unquiet way to say goodbye – and he was mortally ill by then – yet rejuvenated by new thought and work. He found a kind of *legato*, and communicated to his players a way of gauging the weight of each phrase and climax that resists period or Romantic labels, rejects abrupt attacks and grandiloquent pauses as anathema, and holds in view an end-point which overrides the peaks along the way and may even lie beyond the music itself. Put another way, Abbado finally discovered (almost too late) how to internalise his much-loved model of Furtwängler and make it sing for himself. Bear with the contained, Logos-driven first movement for an *Eroica* whose centre of gravity revolves around a funeral march of such broad and pale grief as would make the very stones weep. The measurable: metronome=60 with the VPO (3/89); 70 with the BPO (1/01); 56 in Lucerne (this relationship is also observable in his approaches over time to the Schubert *Unfinished* that opened the very final programme, of which all three nights were preserved in audio, not on film, yet to be released). The unquantifiable: in the transition to the B section you may see Abbado searching for some inner dialogue that still eludes him. He finds in the *Scherzo* a relentless momentum which anticipates Bruckner's Ninth (coupled with

the Schubert), while the Trio forsakes any bucolic spring for a puzzling, Berlioz-like idyll. Only the later variations of the finale unwind in physical exhilaration that places the climax of the symphony in its final two chords, though admitting a startling access to the pain of the funeral march in the variation before the coda. An audience shot in the extended applause sequence shows Mihoko Fujimura in pieces.

The excerpts from *Gurrelieder* are more recognisable from Abbado's earlier recording and performances, the string counterpoint more extrovertly dramatic even while broader, reaching apotheosis in the love-death motif that's surely the best tune Schoenberg ever wrote. Accompanied by the cor anglais's plangent voice of lamentation, Fujimura channels her experience of Waltraute (*Götterdämmerung*) that serves as the song's model, bringing to us at first a retrospective narrative of tragedy, before, with every passing of the 'Klage sucht' ich' refrain, intensifying her line with the fresh horror of a Greek messenger. If she doesn't risk the colours of Janet Baker in the part, she does reserve a phenomenal snarl (vocal and physical, as though the two were separate) for Schoenberg's pay-off verb, 'zerriss'. Between them, every musician on stage tells this story within a story within a story that through its remove encapsulates the tragedy of revolution for which the composer reluctantly stands ('Are you Schoenberg?' enquired the apocryphal officer. 'Nobody

else wanted to be' came the reply). And to which Brahms wrote the overture, which here, like the *Eroica*, does not kindle from the off but comes to a slow and fierce burn. Abbado may place the violas on the outside right but they lie at the heart of Brahms's singing and keening, led by the conductor's faithful lieutenant from Berlin days, Wolfram Christ.

There he is in the Philharmonie on New Year's Eve 1999, and there is Abbado, looking 30 not 13 years younger, making a rich and repeatable story from the naughty-but-nice premise of seven conclusions. From Beethoven to Ravel to Schoenberg, each chocolate in the box is accorded the respect of its proper forces and sound world (this is also strikingly true of the Lucerne concert, where the stage is half-bare for the *Eroica*), chosen and played to avoid aural indigestion. The party turn comes from Klaus-Maria Brandauer in *Gurrelieder's* Wild Hunt, reassuringly score-bound – he's not making this up – as he tongue-twists his way through Schoenberg's verbal ballet. The second half of local dances and marches is a sort of Last Night of the Proms Berlin-style, with Abbado as benign bandmaster.

He's far more engaged by the inner life of the *German Requiem* in a 1997 performance, now on its third reissue, that breathes in the air of the Musikverein (rounding off the BPO's instrumental edges) and stands, no less than the later Lucerne concerts, as testament to an intensely collaborative way of making music (it was my DVD Choice in a Collection on the work, 4/08). Recited by Bruno Ganz at the conductor's memorial concert in Lucerne, Hölderlin's 'Brot und Wein' shares the faltering faith of the Requiem, maybe of Abbado too:

'Endlessly active there, the heavenly
seem to care little
Whether we even are; this is their
sparing us.
For not always, we know, is a weak
vessel able to hold them;
Only at times can mankind bear
the full measure of them.' **G**

THE RECORDINGS



Beethoven Sym No 3, etc (r2013)
Lucerne Fest Orch / Claudio Abbado
Accentus **DVD** ACC2028;
Blu-ray ACC1028



Various Cpsrs Gala from Berlin (r1999)
BPO / Abbado
EuroArts **DVD** 201 3328;
Blu-ray 201 3324



Brahms Deutsches Requiem (r1997)
BPO / Abbado
EuroArts **DVD** 201 2788;
Blu-ray 201 2784

Orchestra, a Bruckner orchestra through and through with just the right sound properties for the music, mellow yet potentially dynamic. Rattle, the BPO and the speculative 'completed' finale is also mandatory, certainly for those who care about how the Ninth might have ended had Bruckner lived to complete it. But Abbado in Lucerne radiates clarity, wisdom and vision, qualities that over the years one had come to expect of him. **Rob Cowan**

Selected comparisons:

VPO, Abbado, r1996 (9/01) (DG) 471 032-2GH,
479 3198GB5 or 479 1046GB41

BPO, Rattle (8/12) (EMI) 952969-2

Leipzig Gewandhaus Orch, Blomstedt

(11/13) (QUER) VKJK1215 or VKJK1230

LSO, Haitink (4/14) (LSO) LSO0746

Busoni • R Strauss

'The Romantic Violin Concerto, Vol 16'

Beethoven Missa solemnis, Op 123 – Benedictus (arr Busoni) **Busoni** Violin Concerto, Op 35a

R Strauss Violin Concerto, Op 8

Tanja Becker-Bender vn

BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra / Garry Walker

Hyperion F CDA68044 (63' • DDD)



Busoni's Violin Concerto (1896-97), despite the success of the Second Sonata that shortly followed it, has never enjoyed much popularity, either in the concert hall or on disc. While it is an early work, not wholly representative of the mature composer, it is beautifully crafted, full of lyricism and appealing melodies. True, the ideas perhaps lack the distinctive memorability of those in the Second Sonata or the great Piano Concerto of a few years later (as well as the latter's heavenly length) but the Violin Concerto is nevertheless a work that leaves one the better for having heard it, especially in such a splendidly rendered performance as this from Tanja Becker-Bender, superbly accompanied by the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra under the excellent Garry Walker.

Frank Peter Zimmermann set the bar for modern recordings in his Editor's Choice Sony disc but Becker-Bender's is its equal. She plays with a same sweet tone, sureness intonation and complete understanding of Busoni's music, and I would be hard-put to choose one over the other as first choice. Couplings will be the deciding factor: those wanting an all-Busoni programme can safely rest with Zimmermann, who chose the Second Sonata; those who like their concertos and chamber music separate may prefer Becker-Bender, especially as she

includes the premiere recording of the Beethoven-Busoni *Benedictus* from the *Missa solemnis*.

Becker-Bender's main coupling is the even earlier, youthful D minor Concerto (1881-82) by this year's sesquicentennialist, Richard Strauss. She plays it for all its worth though cannot disguise the longueurs of the opening, overlong *Allegro* (though she does it make it palatable). Her accounts of the *Lento ma non troppo* and concluding *Prestissimo* are winning. An excellent disc. **Guy Rickards**

Busoni Vn Conc – selected comparison:

Zimmermann, RAI Nat SO, Storgårds
(7/06) (SONY) SK94497

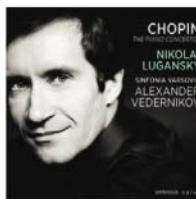
Chopin

Piano Concertos – No 1, Op 11; No 2, Op 21

Nikolai Lugansky pf

Sinfonia Varsovia / Alexander Vedernikov

Ambroisie F AM212 (72' • DDD)



Chopin's two oft-recorded piano concertos are here presented in the order of their composition (ie No 2 followed by No 1). Nikolai Lugansky has a formidable reputation as Chopin pianist – his Opp 10 and 25 Etudes are among the best – but I cannot honestly say these performances recorded in the boomy acoustic of Polish Radio's Witold Lutosławski Studio are wholly successful. And the competition is fierce. In the first two movements of the F minor (No 2), Lugansky's attenuated phrasing and pointless lingering (try the opening of the second movement taken at practice speed) become quite irritating, though he redeems himself somewhat in the finale with some robust (at last) and sparkling playing.

If I cite (and not for the first time in these pages) Josef Hofmann's live broadcasts of the two concertos with Barbirolli from 1936 and 1938, with their substantially faster tempi throughout, the music ebbs and flows in an almost improvisatory narrative, played with far greater imagination. Lugansky sounds mannered and self-conscious by comparison. Ingrid Fliter, whose recent recording for Linn I heartily welcomed in the March issue, adopts similar tempi to Lugansky but the unaffected simplicity of her approach allows the music to speak for itself without, as it were, superfluous commentary. And if even she cannot match Hofmann in the *Romanze* of the E minor (he can make you hold your breath), hers is a more profoundly moving and

poetic account than Lugansky's uncharacteristically wooden conception. Fliter also has the benefit of the suave support of Jun Märkl and the Scottish Chamber Orchestra recorded in state-of-the-art sound. On this occasion Lugansky, I fear, is a worthy also-ran. **Jeremy Nicholas** Selected comparisons:

Hofmann, orch, Barbirolli (2/92⁸) (VAI) VALA1002

Fliter, SCO, Märkl (3/14) (LINN) CKD455

Chopin • Tchaikovsky

Chopin Piano Concerto No 1, Op 11

Tchaikovsky Piano Concerto No 1, Op 23

Ingolf Wunder pf **St Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra / Vladimir Ashkenazy**

DG F 479 0670GH (73' • DDD)

Recorded live at St Petersburg's White Nights, June 2012



Ingolf Wunder first came to public attention in 2010 when he was awarded joint second prize in the International Chopin Competition in Warsaw. The Austrian pianist's latest release was recorded two years ago at St Petersburg's 2012 White Nights festival – a live concert, though you wouldn't know it: the Russians, normally enthusiastic coughers, here manage to keep their expectorating mysteriously silent and the 'frenzied applause' with which, according to the booklet, the 'performance was rewarded' has been excised. A pity; for, deprived of any sense of occasion, the disc is simply another recording of two very good performances of two much-recorded concertos about which, frankly, neither Wunder nor his conductor has much new to say.

Ashkenazy, who 55 years earlier also won second prize at the Chopin Competition, knows the Tchaikovsky backwards, of course (though he dropped it from his piano repertoire early on), and he is at pains to let us hear Tchaikovsky's scoring in meticulous detail: witness the full three beats of the *morendo* horn note that overlaps the other brass instruments in the final bar (107 – 4'08") of the 'introduction'. Though Ashkenazy and Wunder make entirely empathetic partners, the balance in general favours orchestral detail at the expense of the piano (listen to the final pages of the two outer movements). This is less of a problem in Chopin's E minor, with its sparser texture, and *ipso facto* the accompaniment is no mere backdrop for Wunder but a closely argued dialogue. He plays this concerto superbly – in particular

the *Romanze* and the last movement – and the recorded sound has a ringing clarity and depth. **Jeremy Nicholas**

Godard

'The Romantic Piano Concerto, Vol 63'
Piano Concertos – No 1, Op 31; No 2, Op 148.
Introduction and Allegro, Op 49
Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra / Howard Shelley pf
Hyperion (CD) CDA68043 (70' • DDD)



With Vol 63 of Hyperion's 'Romantic Piano Concerto' series we alight upon Benjamin Godard (1849–95), the French composer remembered today, if at all, for the rather lovely *Berceuse* from his otherwise forgotten opera *Jocelyn*. On the evidence of his piano concertos in A minor (1875) and G minor (1893) and the Introduction and Allegro of 1880, his heroes were the likes of Mendelssohn and Schumann, seen through the prism, perhaps, of Saint-Saëns. As far as the pianism goes, Godard was evidently fully aware of the new vistas of technique and colour opened up by

Liszt. That said, it would be difficult to claim that this music lives long in the memory after having heard it.

It does, however, tickle the senses with some attractive, dramatic ideas during the actual process of listening. There is, for example, a delightful, nifty Saint-Saëns-esque *Scherzo* to the A minor Concerto, and an even better one in the G minor, but the one in the A minor tends to run out of steam in its middle section. This is the main drawback in both concertos: if Godard has his moments, he seems all too often to lose his way in a labyrinth of lower than top-drawer material, exhausting its potential to lead anywhere. The Introduction and Allegro, less ambitious, is also more successful, with an opening *Lento* of grandiose pretensions but strong melodic definition as well, and an appealing rum-ti-tum *Allegro*. The performances by the indefatigable Howard Shelley and the Tasmanian orchestra cannot be faulted. **Geoffrey Norris**

Goves

'Just stuff people do'
Trends in personal relationships^a. the terminus wreck^b. Things that are blue, things that are white and things that are black^c

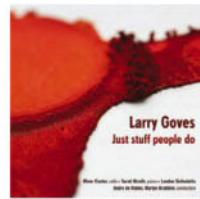
^aOliver Coates vc ^bSarah Nicolls pf

^cSound Intermedia; ^aLondon Sinfonietta /

^aMartyn Brabbins, ^cAndré de Ridder

NMC (CD) NMCD198 (64' • DDD)

^aRecorded live at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, London, ^cJune 3, 2010; ^aDecember 2, 2012



Although his House of Bedlam collective was behind the notable album Talking

Microtonal Blues (1/14), this is the first disc to be devoted to Larry Goves. Cardiff-born (in 1980) and resident in London, Goves brings a singular perspective to orthodox formal conceptions and nominally everyday occurrences. Not least *Trends in personal relationships* (2012), a suite whose movement titles conceal a wealth of unlikely events, such as the fractious collisions of 'Benign violations' and the ultimately enervated rounds of 'Exhausted English landscapes'. More focused in its outward trajectory, *the terminus wreck* (2008) features unaccompanied cello in music that ranges from the plaintively lyrical, via the cumulatively aggressive, to the inwardly communing final movement – its inspiration in Paul Celan yielding an expression the more disturbing for its

KAZUKI YAMADA
ORCHESTRE DE LA SUISSE ROMANDE
 Richard Strauss, Franz Liszt, Ferruccio Busoni,
 Erich Wolfgang Korngold, Franz Schreker

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understatement, at least as eloquently rendered here by Oliver Coates.

Much the longest piece is *Things that are...* (2010), which is a piano concerto not merely in name but also in those contrasts that serve to instil an audible continuity between and across its movements as a whole. Despite (or because of?) the timbral disparities between the piano, with sampled and prepared enhancements, and an ensemble whose strings comprise at least 16 violins but one each of viola and double bass, the interplay is by no means removed from conventional practice – whether in the powerful underlying momentum of ‘blue’, alternation of soulfulness and skittishness in ‘white’ or skewed rhetoric of ‘black’, with its deftest of non-resolutions. An eventful and gripping work, consummately well realised by Sarah Nicolls.

Hopefully the other two pieces of this sequence inspired by Paul Auster’s novel *The New York Trilogy* will find their way on to disc in due course. For now, the present release bolsters Goves’s standing on the new music scene – and in no small measure.

Richard Whitehouse

Gregson

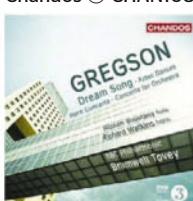
Aztec Dances^a. Concerto for Orchestra.

Dream Song. Horn Concerto^b

^aWissam Boustany / ^bRichard Watkins /n

BBC Philharmonic Orchestra / Bramwell Tovey

Chandos (CHAN10822 (75' • DDD)



Edward Gregson has a formidable standing as a brass band composer, and his links with that world are writ large in the Horn Concerto composed with brass band accompaniment in 1971 and only arranged for full orchestra two years ago. Written for the great Ifor James, the Horn Concerto is technically virtuoso and substantial in length (over 17 minutes here), a superior utterance to either of the (delightful) Arnold concertos and the finest British example after those by Musgrave and McCabe.

Gregson’s style has many resonances of Malcolm Arnold’s style and there are passages in *Dream Song* (2010) and the Concerto for Orchestra (1983, given here in its 2001 revision) which might also have strayed from one of Arnold’s brighter scores – try the central section of the latter’s opening ‘Intrada’, for instance. Gregson, however, remains his own man for all that, the structure and internal processes of his works following their own particular paths. This is most noticeable in

Aztec Dances (2013), the most recent work here, a fizzingly gripping chamber Flute Concerto that originated as a recorder-and-piano duo in 2010, inspired by the British Museum’s splendid ‘Moctezuma: Aztec Ruler’ exhibition. Gregson was fired by the role of music in Aztec life and has succeeded in imagining himself – from a 500-year distance – into Aztec ritual.

Wissam Boustany and Richard Watkins play with superlative technique and verve in the two concertos but the same must be averred for the BBC Philharmonic, well marshalled by Bramwell Tovey and caught in sumptuous Chandos sound. There really is something for everyone in this disc – glorious Arnoldesque tunes, stimulatingly serious expression, brilliant orchestration: a very Gregsonian cocktail. Enjoy!

Guy Rickards

Haydn



Keyboard Concertos –

HobVIII/3; HobVIII/4; HobVIII/11

Jean-Efflam Boustany /p

Manchester Camerata / Gábor Takács-Nagy

Chandos (CHAN10808 (61' • DDD)



Jean-Efflam Boustany has proved himself one of today’s leading Haydn interpreters – amply so on five volumes of sonatas (and counting), each enthusiastically reviewed. He now presents the three authentic keyboard concertos in performances that demonstrate his innate love and understanding of this music in performances of the expected vivacity and insight.

All that hardly needs saying. However, readers will be aware of three existing benchmark digital recordings of these works and may wonder whether another is warranted. The answer has to be a confident and unhesitating ‘yes’, given Boustany’s highly individual approach and response to these scores.

In the sonatas he has been quite open about taking the score merely as a starting point, as a launch-pad for explorations of ornamentation and variation, and he adopts the same outlook here – not just varying reprises but decorating Haydn’s sometimes bare or pattern-based lines right from the start, almost from the first phrase of his entry in the F major Concerto (No 3). The slow movement of the same work he transforms into a *soffeggi* that unfolds seemingly in a single breath, effortlessly matching the opening violin solo in its vocal expressivity and rising to an almost

Argerich-like freedom. The superbly reactive playing of Boustany and the Manchester Camerata renders the outer movements of the G major (No 4) more doggedly pithy than they can sometimes seem, while in the later D major (No 11), they play deliciously with the tempo in the *Rondo all’ungherese* finale.

Does this supplant the three direct comparisons, listed below? That will depend on your preference, whether for Ax, idiomatic if a touch monochrome, Andsnes’s liquid-crystal accuracy or Hamelin’s insouciance. While their approaches hail from west of Vienna, Boustany comes in from the east: he is married to a Hungarian, has more than a smattering of the language and collaborates here with a Hungarian director, all of which helps add to the piquancy of these performances – and not only in the D major’s finale. Boustany plays his own cadenzas, too, creating a delicious mix of 18th- and 21st-century flavours, which is true of his performances throughout these works.

It’s fair to say that this is neither Haydn’s most advanced music nor the most technically challenging for the pianist. But who would have thought there was so much to discover in it? I’d be loath to relinquish Andsnes or Hamelin from my collection but will gladly now make room for Boustany’s complementary and entirely personal take on these concertos.

David Threasher

Pf Concs – selected comparisons:

Ax, Franz Liszt CO (5/93⁸) (SONY) 88765 44018-2

Andsnes, Norwegian CO (4/00) (EMI) 556960-2

Hamelin, Vns du Roy, Labadie (5/13) (HYPE) CDA67925

MacMillan

‘MacMillan Series, Vol 3: Work for

Chamber Orchestra with Soloists’

From Ayrshire^a. Tuireadh^b.

Kiss on Wood^c. ...as others see us...

^aLars Wouters van den Oudeweijer / ^bLinus Roth

vn ^cJulius Berger vc Netherlands Radio Chamber

Philharmonic Orchestra / James MacMillan

Challenge Classics (CC72638 (61' • DDD)



Despite its geographically Scottish title, the opening movement of *From Ayrshire* feels more akin to the pastoral Gloucestershire of Vaughan Williams’s *Lark Ascending*, the violin of Linus Roth floating ethereally above placid orchestral textures. If, as MacMillan has suggested, this 2005 work is built around the Scottish melody ‘Ca’ the yowes’, it is ►

GRAMOPHONE Collector

BĚLOHLÁVEK'S DVORÁK

Rob Cowan listens to a new six-disc set containing the Czech conductor's latest take on the complete symphonies and concertos



Force of personality: Jiří Bělohlávek records with the Czech Philharmonic at the Rudolfinum, Prague

Quite aside from a wealth of illuminating detail and an empathetic approach to Dvořák's symphonic oeuvre overall, the crowning virtue of this set is in the way it relates the composer's artistic growth. **Jiří Bělohlávek** focuses the precise character of each piece, so that the aura of youthfulness he brings to the First Symphony (and to the third movement in particular) contrasts markedly with the breadth, mellowness and epic proportions of his *New World* – played, incidentally, without its first-movement exposition repeat. The Sixth's balmy exposition is also left single-tier, which isn't surprising given that there's so much of it, though beam up from around 3'44" into the very vital Kertész recording (Decca) and you'll catch the beautiful bridge passage that we miss out on with Bělohlávek. The Fifth, a Dvořák 'Pastoral' in all but name, wears a very sunny countenance and is at its most amiable in the first and second movements, whereas the quietly questioning transition from the slow movement to the *Scherzo* recalls the artful handling of Karel Šejna (Supraphon). The Second Symphony, which here plays for not far short of an hour, runs the gamut – even within its first minute – from darkness to light, and Bělohlávek allows its rich fund of ideas to flow freely. You could call it a vade mecum of Dvořák's evolving symphonic style.

Jiří Bělohlávek focuses the precise character of each piece'

In one or two instances among these early symphonies you can sense Dvořák stumbling across awkward dissonances that, had he been more experienced, he might have ironed out. One, involving quiet woodwinds and strings, arrives at 6'09" into the first movement of the Second (if played out of context you'd probably think it was from the 20th century), the other, like a momentary spot of inebriation, occurs from 7'21" to around 7'35" in the finale of the Third, where Bělohlávek takes the best possible option – he just goes for it. I wasn't too sure about the way he makes a tiny pause at around 0'41" into the Third's first movement, before the repeated string figurations, which to my ears disrupts the flow: check, for comparison, Václav Smetáček (Supraphon) or, among complete cycles, Vladimír Válek (also Supraphon) and, especially illuminating, the wonderful Witold Rowicki with the LSO (Decca). Bělohlávek and his Czech players make the strongest possible case for the Fourth Symphony's highly atmospheric opening pages, 'Wagner meets Smetana' you might say, though the lyrical second subject is Dvořák through and through. *Tannhäuser* greets the opening of the second

movement but surely the symphony's highlight, also the high point on this particular reading, is the breezily cantering *Scherzo* with its riotously festive Trio.

The volatile Seventh is surveyed without compromise if at times with rather less close observation than one would have liked (string lines are occasionally blurred) and that sense of impulsive engagement that Kubelík brought to the work (BPO, DG) isn't quite matched. And yet there are magical moments, one in particular near the start of the slow movement (0'50"), where Bělohlávek draws from his orchestra great depth of tone, releasing high woodwinds like a flock of doves. Not for him nostalgically aching *portamentos*; and, as with the Sixth, the finale really blazes.

When it comes to the concertos, Andrew Achenbach has already commented in these pages (7/14) on **Alisa Weilerstein**'s 'risk-taking flair' in the Cello Concerto, an impression I would fully endorse. Bělohlávek's predominantly symphonic view of the score provides a powerful but disciplined framework for her spontaneous, tonally full-bodied playing. The Piano Concerto is performed with the greatest sensitivity, as you can check for yourself by cueing 5'50" into the first movement, where **Garrick Ohlsson** achieves a magical *diminuendo* and the orchestra respond with gently etched string chords. The trick with this work, it seems to me, is to approach the solo part as a first among equals: Richter did it in Munich with Carlos Kleiber (EMI) and Ohlsson does it here with Bělohlávek. **Frank Peter Zimmermann** offers a spruce, dancing account of the Violin Concerto, with spot-on intonation and a Milstein-like suaveness of tone. Bělohlávek's accompaniment is typically flexible; witness how he eases the pace for the first movement's second subject.

Summing up, I'd offer a secure 'central' recommendation while citing Rowicki as a dramatic vintage alternative, Kertész's set as more brightly lit and the less consistent Kubelík cycle worth considering for the sake of four or five exceptionally fine performances. Cycles under Neumann and Válek, both for Supraphon, also tell it as it is, if without quite the degree of personality that Bělohlávek offers here. The sound on this new set is by and large first-rate. **G**

THE RECORDING



Dvořák Cpte Sym & Concs
Czech PO / Bělohlávek
Decca ⑧ 478 6757DX6

wrapped up so heavily in the characteristic sounds of English string-writing that it is barely recognisable. The brief second movement is a dazzling exhibition of violinistic virtuosity in which Roth shows breathtaking brilliance.

Revealing rather stronger Scottish characteristics, *Tuireadh* ('Lament') was inspired by the 1988 disaster on the Piper Alpha oil rig off the Scottish coast in which 167 lives were lost. Some exceptionally committed playing from members of the Netherlands Radio Chamber Philharmonic, not least the soulful clarinet which opens this 20-minute outpouring of grief, calls to mind the traditional keening of Gaelic women when faced with a communal tragedy.

The most colourful and spirited music here, however, comes in ...as others see us..., seven musical reflections of portraits of noteworthy English figures found in London's National Portrait Gallery. I particularly like the perky, almost folksy dance associated with Henry VIII, underpinned by a growling contrabassoon and a persistently beating tabor. This presents a tune which crops up in various guises in all six movements, weird and eccentric for the Earl of Rochester, gloating in the trumpet call for the Duke of Marlborough, fussy, chattering and occasionally contemplative for Byron and Wordsworth (drawn together musically, as it were), in the style of an English hymn tune for TS Eliot and calm for the pacifist Dorothy Hodgkin. MacMillan at his most imaginative and inventive best exploring the limited resources of a chamber orchestra, these are compelling performances given particular impact under the composer's taut direction. **Marc Rochester**

Mahler

Symphony No 9

Danish National Symphony Orchestra /

Michael Schønwandt

Challenge Classics M ② CC72636 (80' • DDD)

Recorded live 2012



Michael Schønwandt's own programme notes are candid and concise: an assignment taken

at four days' notice to replace an ailing colleague, of two concerts, stitched (to my ears) seamlessly together by Challenge Classics with no applause. He had not led the Ninth for some years and in his realisation I hear a circumstantial decisiveness, borne of remembered familiarity, that may be considered

appropriate given the symphony's own tantalisingly provisional status, completed but never finished as Mahler would have done if only determined to break his own established cycle of composition – performance – revision.

It's a performance that resists the tendencies of discontinuity that others find throughout his music, not through the imposition of a seamless *legato* but with neat tempo relationships that sometimes belie the composer's ever more heated verbal instructions. In place of a *Ländler*, 'clumsy, heavy-footed, coarse', is a jolly, up-tempo number, close cousin to the *Scherzo* of Schubert's Ninth, forcing the quicker second theme into a taut *danse macabre* and thus making rare sense of the third, a World of Yesterday, of already only half-remembered quaint rural manners, seen as the senile exercise in nostalgia that it really can be through the movement's increasing confusion between the themes and their tempi. Schønwandt and his players make a nice distinction between the types of ending towards the movement's own conclusion, in the contrast of jutting or tapered phrases, that we used to call masculine or feminine.

This approach pulls back the symphony's centre of parody from the 'Rondo-Burleske' and makes binding links between the first two movements of a kind that Mahler already tried in the Sixth, at least in the *Scherzo-Andante* plan. The Rondo's double fugues work themselves out in busy, somewhat relentless ways of an inconsequentiality only magnified by Challenge's close miking, which is otherwise a signal advantage, and so the *Adagio*'s pre-echo becomes the interlude of an interlude, before the real thing in D flat comes as a true surprise, transforming with understated tenderness the Tchaikovskian rhetoric Mahler had determined to adopt. There are many more *fortissimo* and *sforzando* markings in the score than you'd guess from listening to Schønwandt, whose long singing lines, gently swinging rhythm and sweetly modulated solo strings cultivate a lullaby for extinction that, as he remarks, 'lifts us to a totally different spiritual level...where earthly pain is left behind us'. That's not my idea of the symphony but it may be yours. Mahler is nothing if not equivocal.

Peter Quantrill

Messiaen

Turangalila-Symphonie

Angela Hewitt pf

Valérie Hartmann-Claverie ondes martenot

Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra / Hannu Lintu

Ondine F ODE1251-5 (75' • DDD/DSD)



Juanjo Mena's 2012 *Turangalila-Symphonie* for Hyperion felt like the dawning of a new Messiaenic age. As I said in my review, 'Mena utterly redefines the terms under which past/current/future *Turangalilas* need to be judged'.

And, like Mena, Hannu Lintu reclaims *Turangalila* as a genuine slice of weird. Following Myung-Whun Chung's perfumed 1990 DG performance (inexplicably authorised by Messiaen HQ) and Kent Nagano's overly corporate 2000 Berlin Philharmonic version, Mena and Lintu relish the munificent mess and leave Messiaen's internal contradictions hanging. In Lintu's fifth movement, 'Joie du sang des étoiles', kinky, growling trumpets remind us that Boulez once dismissed the symphony as 'bordello music' (as if that's necessarily a bad thing); but the final statement of Messiaen's love theme, heard as a chorale that swells towards a climax in the last movement, is beautifully contoured here and makes you tingle where it counts – a sincere representation of human love.

Too many *Turangalilas* fail to accommodate the work's true sonic spectrum on record and I admired the immediacy of Mena's recording. Lintu and recording producer Laura Heikinheimo opt for a more lifelike sound environment, meaning the low end of Valérie Hartmann-Claverie's ondes martenot doesn't chop through the orchestral bulk like Cynthia Millar's with Mena, nor do you feel quite as saturated in sound. But Lintu's awareness of internal balance is masterly. The machine-like *tutti* that follows the first-movement piano cadenza marches relentlessly forwards, strings crooning high above the extreme bump and grind of wind and percussion; in the genteel sixth movement Lintu makes Messiaen's competing layers dance sensually around each other.

Following the tumultuous opening movements, Mena manages to reset time during the sixth movement (which clocks in at 12'41" against Lintu's 9'52"). Lintu kicks off the opening movement at a stampeding pace and generally favours bright-side tempi throughout. When Messiaen pulls his various strands together in the eighth movement, Mena persuades you that contrasting time cycles are colliding; Lintu prefers to lock the music into the continuous present. Mena's pianist, Steven Osborne, was built to play this music; Angela Hewitt is more strait-laced and

GRAMOPHONE Collector

MAAZEL'S MAHLER, PART 2

Rob Cowan listens to the second instalment of the late conductor's Mahler cycle, taking in the Fourth, Fifth and Sixth symphonies



Members of the Philharmonia's horn section, excellent in the Scherzo of Mahler's Fifth Symphony

The broad principles of Lorin Maazel's Mahler, whether in Vienna in the early eighties or at London's Royal Festival Hall in 2011, are not difficult to itemise: ears cocked rather than heart-on-sleeve, widely spaced dynamics, weighty chords, imposing climaxes, generally unhurried tempi and outspoken instrumental solos, with a fair degree of textural delicacy an invariable part of the mix. Maazel as composer and solo performer is always at pains to pinpoint salient detail that might otherwise escape our attention. In that respect he's light years removed from the equally committed but less interventionist manners of say, Claudio Abbado, Bernard Haitink, Michael Gielen or David Zinman (whose Mahler cycle is much underrated in my view).

The Sixth Symphony's angular *Scherzo* growls, thumps and dances, with strong accents and superb work from the Philharmonia basses. I should also mention at this stage that throughout the set there's equally distinctive work from the orchestra's timpanist, much of it extremely sensitive. The *Allegro energico* that precedes the *Scherzo* suggests a sense of grim resolve, though Maazel takes a very loving approach to the second subject, its decorative filigree clearly audible, especially among the woodwinds. The *Andante* emerges as as much a song without words as the Fifth's *Adagietto*.

does, a seamless narrative, beautifully phrased. Maazel prepares the finale well, with implied spectres unsettling the night, and the transition into the main body of the movement is effectively handled though the momentum isn't sustained with quite the degree of tension needed. The hammer-blows have plenty of presence, though not as much as on Zinman's recording.

For the trumpet fanfare that opens the Fifth Symphony, Maazel draws a more marked *crescendo* from his player than he does from his Vienna Philharmonic counterpart, the overall impression of the movement majestically monumental rather than 'street-band processional' (Kubelík's compelling option). Come the faster middle section (6'01") and the strings all but disappear, at least temporarily, which compromises the episode's intensity (in this respect at least the Vienna recording is superior) but the return of the march proper signals power to spare. The stormy second movement's disorientating mood swings find brass and timps brought well to the fore, and no lack of intimacy in the movement's many quieter moments. The Philharmonia horns excel in the *Scherzo*, the strings in the *Adagietto*, which is a little broader than before and harbours at least one breathtaking moment, at 7'46", where a gentle harp arpeggio is tailed by the quietest downward violin *glissando*. Viewed overall, four minutes of extra time allow

Maazel the freedom to pull out stops that he might otherwise have left in place.

The Fourth, a quite different sort of performance, opens with clean, pertly phrased woodwinds and no-nonsense handling of the principal string theme. Lightness is the watchword here, often with the aura of chamber music, enhanced by a notably warm cello line at 1'41". Throughout the first movement, instrumental dovetailing is very effective, while keenly inflected dynamics elasticise the opening pages of the second movement. From 5'46", Maazel cues a perky clarinet, expressive solo strings, a gradual darkening of texture (the basses arrive first) and that magical moment where Mahler runs the gamut through all the orchestral registers, his use of individual instruments betraying the hand of a true master. So far, so good – very good, I'd say. But what about the opening of the slow movement? Why so matter-of-fact, especially in comparison with Maazel's Vienna Philharmonic version (Sony, 3/85), where the pace is more relaxed and the range of expression that much wider? Even more so when comparing this Philharmonia concert with David Zinman and the Zurich Tonhalle, one of the high points of Zinman's Mahler cycle (RCA), the slow movement in particular rapturously beautiful and without a hint of interpretative indulgence. Among the movement's most uplifting episodes is the accelerating excitement that heads us towards horns and held strings (from 15'22", here sliding among plentiful *portamentos*), something of a damp squib, which is hardly the case with Maazel in Vienna, Zinman in Zurich or, most especially, Szell in Cleveland. There's yet more telling woodwind detail at the start of the finale, though Sarah Fox, a pretty-voiced singer occasionally troubled by over-earnest vibrato, doesn't quite focus the rhythm of the word 'himmlischen' – a tiny point, admittedly, but I kept on 'hearing' it. Kathleen Battle on Maazel's Vienna recording makes a more entrancing impression. Odd imperfections aside, I would still opt for Maazel's London Mahler over its earlier Viennese counterpart and I eagerly await the Royal Festival Hall Seventh, which was easily my favourite Maazel Mahler interpretation in the Vienna cycle. **G**

THE RECORDINGS



Maazel Symns Nos 4-6
Fox; Philh Orch / Maazel
Signum **④** SIGCD361

polite – here Lintu is the dominant personality. **Philip Clark**

Selected comparisons:

Opéra-Bastille Orch, Chung (11/91) (DG)

431 781-2GH, 477 9770GM2 or 479 0114GB10

BPO, Nagano (9/01) (TELD) 8573 82043-2

Bergen PO, Mena (10/12) (HYPE) CDA67816

Mozart

Piano Concertos – No 22, K482; No 24, K491

Angela Hewitt *pf*

National Arts Centre Orchestra / Hannu Lintu

Hyperion *®* CDA68049 (63' • DDD)



Angela Hewitt continues her Mozart series with Hannu Lintu, switching

from her Italian orchestra to the Canadian National Arts Centre Orchestra, which the conductor melds into a flexible and characterful ensemble. The concertos Nos 22 and 24 are linked by C minor, the key of the outer movements of K491 and the inner one of K482. It was, as Hewitt writes in her lucid and well-researched notes, a key of great tragedy for the composer. The problem is that although I found myself nodding in agreement with what she writes, what I hear leaves a rather different impression.

This is Mozart characterised by clarity of thought, attention to detail and reactive interplay between soloist and orchestra. But too often, pristine phrasing comes at the expense of a true depth of expression. In the grief-laden *Andante* of K482, though well set up by the orchestra, the piano's utterance of the theme sounds cool and detached, especially when compared with Edwin Fischer's mix of eloquence and Classical directness. And in the finale, Brendel and Mackerras prove more compelling purveyors of Mozart's gentle wit.

K491 troubled me still more. The opening is darker in the collective hands of the Orpheus CO and the Cleveland Orchestra, for Goode and Uchida respectively. When Hewitt makes her entry, again it's a strangely clipped affair; and though her passagework is beautifully honed, she doesn't seem to engage with the unease of the score as some do. The moment where the flute takes up the opening theme, accompanied by piano (5'06"), for instance, sounds almost buoyant alongside Uchida's proto-Romantic reading. And again in the slow movement, Hewitt's pert phrasing prettifies the music where Curzon and Goode, in their different ways, lay bare its soul.

Brendel, too, offers a much deeper, more multi-layered reading, Mackerras an ideal partner. Not a contender, unless you're a diehard Hewitt fan. **Harriet Smith**

K482 – selected comparisons:

E Fischer, orch, Barbirolli (7/98) (APR) APR5523

*Brendel, SCO, Mackerras (6/01) (PHIL) *®* 468 367-2PH*

K491 – selected comparisons:

Brendel, SCO, Mackerras (1/00) (PHIL) 462 622-2PH

Goode, Orpheus CO (2/00) (NONE) 7559 79489-2

Uchida, Cleveland Orch (12/09) (DECC) 478 1524DH

Curzon, Bavarian RSO, Kubelík (AUDI) AUDITE95 453

Mozart

'Mozart's Instrumental Oratorium'

Symphonies – No 39, K543; No 40, K550;

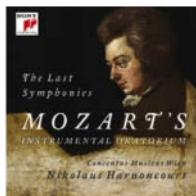
No 41, 'Jupiter', K551

Concentus Musicus Wien / Nikolaus Harnoncourt

Sony Classical *®* 88843 02635-2 (104' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Musikverein, Vienna, 12-14

October 2013



The bizarre title, 'Mozart's Instrumental Oratorium', derives from Harnoncourt's belief that the three late symphonies form a sort of 'last statement'. In support of this he avers that they form a single tripartite structure: No 39 is the only one with an introduction while No 41 is the only one with a true finale; No 39 doesn't really finish while No 40 doesn't really begin; and he refers to the skein of motivic resemblances throughout the three works. Be that as it may, this is the first time he has recorded the works with Concentus Musicus, the period band he formed all of 61 years ago.

What he also locates in this miraculous trilogy is the rhythmic motor that propels each work. While there are those characteristic hiatuses and pullings-up that inevitably characterise a Harnoncourt performance, he never allows the underlying impetus of the music to relax. Slow movements are kept moving and some (me included) will find minuets rather too fast for comfort. Outer *allegros* build irresistibly, despite Harnoncourt's firm belief that no silence can't be stretched – and a tendency to pause unnecessarily at repeat bars.

This is what one knows to expect from Harnoncourt, though. Nevertheless, along with his reassessment of the musical content of these symphonies, he and the Concentus have clearly reconsidered the sound world of this music. Blend now seems less important than individual instrumental timbre, with the all-important horn parts spotlighted, trumpets permitted

to scythe through the texture, and a notably proactive bass-line. The clarinet-led Trio of No 39's Minuet, one of Mozart's truly unique inspirations, sounds gloriously like a rusty squeezebox in this performance. It's a far cry from the suavity of, say, Herreweghe's recent traversal (PHI, A/13). All repeats are taken, even second time around in minuets (which is fair enough at these tempi), and – especially importantly – in the *Jupiter*'s finale, here a conception of overwhelming grandeur that matches the breathtaking scope of the music in every bar. Notwithstanding Harnoncourt's idiosyncrasies, this is a singularly compelling journey through some of the finest symphonies of the era, less mannered than his 1980s recordings with the Concertgebouw (Teldec), more thoroughgoing than the conclusion of Adam Fischer's Danish cycle (Dacapo, 1/14) and far better played than Brüggen's recent set (Glossa, 8/14). **David Threasher**

Puw

'...onyt agaraf y drws...' ('...unless I open the door...'). Oboe Concerto. Reservoirs. Hologram. Overture 'Torri'r Garreg' ('Break the Stone')

David Cowley *ob*

BBC National Orchestra of Wales / Jac van Steen

Signum *®* SIGCD378 (72' • DDD)



Among Welsh composers of the younger generation, Guto Pryderi Puw (b1971) looks likely to achieve real prominence. This disc of his orchestral music confirms an assured mastery of the medium – not least in '*...unless I open the door...*' (2007), a tone-poem inspired by a tale from the Mabinogion whose twin aspects of celebration and trepidation are vividly reflected in its ever more fraught trajectory. Running the gamut from dense harmonic clusters to folk tunes, the judicious placing of its events more than outweighs its overtly short-term evolution – all making for a bracing embodiment of its narrative and a vivid showpiece in its own right.

The Oboe Concerto (2006) feels more abstract in its representing the human voice from three distinct speech contexts. Thus the insinuating lyricism of the opening 'Rumour', followed by the unyielding activity of 'Chatter'; then the central *Lento* brings a measure of inward repose to which the cadenza forms an equable transition into the final 'Stutter', with its lightly ironic mood and demonstrative close – David Cowley unfazed by the demands of

a notable addition to its genre. *Reservoirs* (2002) contrasts the visual appeal of such landscapes with the demise of communities they often engendered but the alternation of tranquil and aggressive episodes fails to build into a cumulatively sustained whole. Likewise in *Hologram* (2010), whose aural translation of this visual phenomenon affords a fastidious timbral interplay that rather fails to cohere in its later stages. No such doubts about *Break the Stone* (2009), a brief curtain-raiser whose melodic ideas are borne along by its rhythmic impetus through to the headlong close.

The steadfast advocacy of the BBC NOW and Jac van Steen is abetted by the immediacy of Cardiff's Hoddinott Hall – resulting in a visceral statement of intent from a composer with whom to reckon.

Richard Whitehouse

Räihälä

'Peat, Smoke & Seaweed Storm'

Barlinnie Nine^a. Soliloque 2: La tornade^b. Aflao Highway^c. Rautasade (Iron Rain)^d. Ardbeg^d
^bJukka Harju hn ^cMatilda Kärkkäinen pf
^{ad}Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra /
^aSakari Oramo, ^dDima Slobodenouk
 Alba F ABCD367 (65' • DDD)



There aren't many classical works inspired by football – Benedict Mason's opera *Playing Away*, Martinu's *Half-Time* – but none hitherto on a single player that I know of. So who is the first to be immortalised, in Osmo Tapiio Räihälä's *Barlinnie Nine* (1999, rev 2005): Pelé, Maradona, Johan Cruyff? No, Duncan Ferguson, the troubled Everton and Scotland striker dubbed 'Duncan Disorderly'. Räihälä describes his 'musical portrait' of Ferguson as an 'Apotheosis of Underachievement', though this does not fairly assess his post-modernist tone-picture.

Räihälä's style is 21st-century tonal, often highly chromatic (for expressive reasons), occasionally polytonal, but skirts around atonality. All the works are descriptive, at least in generalised ways, rather than abstract, and structurally rather free. These facets are evident in the other orchestral works here, *Iron Rain* (2008) and *Ardbeg* ('The Ultimate Piece for Orchestra', 2003). *Iron Rain* is a vividly realised tone-poem whose title tells one all one needs to know, *Ardbeg* a paean to the renowned single malt and the island where it is distilled. The Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra play all three works with finesse.

Two solo instrumental pieces separate the orchestral items: *Soliloque 2* for horn

(2012) and *Aflao Highway* (2011), a three-movement piano suite inspired by a Ghanaian road trip. The later is perhaps the least successful here, the relatively monochrome tonal palette not as engaging as in the other pieces. Jukka Harju's virtuoso rendition of the less diffuse second *Soliloquy*, subtitled *La tornade* (complete with hints of the 'raging storm' that occurred during its recording), is more winning. This is a well-recorded disc of attractive music, well worth investigating.

Guy Rickards

Respighi

Serenata, P54. Trittico botticelliano, P151.

Gli uccelli, P154. Suite, P58^a

^aKyler Brown org Chamber Orchestra of New York 'Ottorino Respighi' / Salvatore Di Vittorio
 Naxos 8 573168 (67' • DDD)



RESPIGHI
The Birds
 Three Botticelli Pictures • Suite in G major

Kyler Brown, Organ

Chamber Orchestra of New York

Salvatore Di Vittorio

Inquisitive disc-buyers will almost certainly alight on tracks 10-13 of this one. If the *Trittico botticelliano* and *Gli uccelli* are scarcely unknown to the catalogue, Respighi's Suite in G major for strings and organ is apparently recorded here for the first time – or, at least, for the first time in its original, uncut version. Is this a good thing? Salvatore Di Vittorio's new 2011 edition restores two or three minutes' music and he conducts it with energy, but it remains a great, galumphing piece of Baroque.

It would help if the strings of the Chamber Orchestra of New York sounded completely unanimous in the opening passage of the 'Preludio', but that might have something to do with less than ideally focused acoustics and difficulties of balance between orchestra and organ in Long Island's Church of St Jean Baptiste. This is early, 1905 Respighi, long before he found a greater finesse in *Fontane di Roma* a decade later. As such, it is a curiosity, a portent of the subsequent homage he was to pay to earlier Italian masters, but in the Suite his enthusiasm for Frescobaldi, Monteverdi and so on is hardly tempered by either taste or discipline.

The *Trittico botticelliano* and *Gli uccelli*, preceded here by the little 1904 *Serenata* in another Di Vittorio edition, show Respighi in a much more favourable light. The performances, dully recorded in the Adelphi University Performing Arts Center, are competent but not entirely equal to summoning up the sophistication of Respighi's mature orchestral palette.

Geoffrey Norris



Cuarteto Casals
 play Mozart



© Josep Molina for harmonia mundi

String Quartets dedicated to Joseph Haydn
 K.428, 465 'Dissonanz' & 387

The sincerest form of flattery. When he dedicated a set of six quartets to Haydn in 1785, Mozart was acknowledging the latter's supremacy in this difficult genre, admitting that they had cost him 'a long and laborious study'. But the effort was worthwhile: inspired by the older composer's masterpieces, Mozart did more than just imitate him; he integrated Haydn's innovations into his own style, thereby producing a new milestone of Viennese Classicism.

'Spain's leading string quartet'
 Piers-Burton Page – International Record Review

Cuarteto Casals perform at the Wigmore Hall (London) on the 21st and 22nd September 2014.

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Schulhoff

Schulhoff Concerto for Piano and Small Orchestra, Op 43^a. Concerto doppio^b. Concerto for String Quartet and Wind Ensemble^c
Beethoven Rondo a capriccio, 'Rage Over a Lost Penny', Op 129 (arr Schulhoff)
^{ab}Frank-Immo Zichner pf^b Jaques Zoon fl^c Leipzig Quartet; Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester / Roland Kluttrig Capriccio F C5197 (67' • DDD)



Here are three substantial concertos from the pen of the Czech-Jewish composer Ervín Schulhoff (1894–1942), the earliest being the second (though not labelled as such) of his piano concertos. Composed in 1923, it's an exuberantly inventive, bewitchingly colourful and often affectingly tender creation in three linked parts, brimful of cocky personality and culminating in a veritable knees-up of a finale featuring a battery of percussion. Jazz plays a prominent role in this riotous movement, as it does in the memorably bluesy central section of the finale of the scarcely less appealing *Concerto doppio* for flute, piano, string orchestra and two horns. Conceived in 1927 for the French virtuoso René Le Roy, it's a bustling concerto grosso stylistically akin to contemporaries such as Hindemith and Martinů, and wears an altogether more approachable demeanour than the Concerto for string quartet and wind ensemble that Schulhoff composed in 1930. For all the immaculate craftsmanship on show, the latter proves a rather more obdurate offering – in the first two movements at least, a little of the irreverent gleam has gone out of the composer's inspiration. Bringing up the rear is a deft orchestration of Beethoven's *Rage Over a Lost Penny* that Schulhoff made for Czech radio in 1940 (the following year he took on Soviet citizenship, only to be arrested and interned by the Nazis).

Performances are unfailingly tidy and sympathetic, the 2007 recordings by Deutschlandradio Kultur excellent, and any readers yet to encounter the varied output of this fascinating figure (who succumbed to tuberculosis at the age of 48 in a Bavarian concentration camp) could do a lot worse than investigate this likeable release. **Andrew Achenbach**

Schumann

Symphonies - No 1, 'Spring', Op 38; No 2, Op 61; No 3, 'Rhenish', Op 97; No 4, Op 120
Scottish Chamber Orchestra / Robin Ticciati
 Linn F ② CKD450 (133' • DDD/DSD)



What blessed times these are for Schumannistas. Hard on the heels not only of Yannick Nézet-Séguin's compelling survey of the four symphonies but also of Sir Simon Rattle's sumptuously packaged own-label-launching set comes this one from the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and Robin Ticciati, a team that has already proved itself admirably on disc in Berlioz (5/12, 6/13). Ticciati follows Nézet-Séguin's lead in opting for the 1851 revision of the Fourth Symphony rather than the sparer 1841 version selected by Rattle, and it is to the Canadian's offering that the new set bears the greater similarity.

Clarity has been a common feature of recent recordings of Schumann's orchestral music, giving the lie yet again to the old canard about his cack-handed orchestral abilities. Here, close reading of the score combines with Philip Hobbs's transparent surround-sound engineering (Perth Concert Hall last November and December) in a recording teeming with revealing detail. Ticciati clearly knows how he wants this music to go and his strong partnership with the Edinburgh players enables him to shape readings notable for their energy and individuality. The Fourth receives a particularly forceful performance, with go-ahead tempi combining with its bolstered orchestration to demonstrate how the earlier version was but a transitory stage in the work's evolution. In the Second, too, Ticciati shows how this is the most uneasy expression of the key of C major, the final songful peroration hard-won through the obsessions of the earlier movements.

Throughout, the performances are characterised by a woodwind sweetness that is becoming a trademark of this orchestra. The timpanist uses hard sticks to cut through the texture at strategic moments and brass are doleful or stentorian as required. Strings, of the order 10-8-6-5-3, are perhaps not as lissom (in fleeter movements such as the *Scherzo* of the Second) as the COE for Nézet-Séguin or the Swedish CO for Thomas Dausgaard (whose three-disc set contains both versions of the Fourth and a more complete collection of orchestral works). This is an extremely likeable and beautifully recorded traversal, worthy of standing alongside any of its recent competitors. On a personal level, though, for me Nézet-Séguin just about shades it for the very special sense of joy exuded by his Paris performances.

Nevertheless, the new discs give almost equal pleasure and are sure to be invoked in future lists of comparisons. **David Threasher**

Selected comparisons:

Swedish CO, Dausgaard (5/07, 5/08, 1/09) (BIS) BIS-SACD1519, 1569, 1619 (oas)
 COE, Nézet-Séguin (5/14) (DG) 479 2437GH2
 BPO, Rattle (6/14) (BPO) BPHR140011

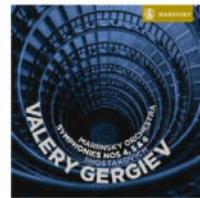
Shostakovich

Symphonies - No 4, Op 43;

No 5, Op 47; No 6, Op 54

Mariinsky Orchestra / Valery Gergiev

Mariinsky M ② MAR0545 (135' • DDD/DSD)
 Recorded live in the Concert Hall of the Mariinsky Theatre, St Petersburg, 2012-13



Reviewing Gergiev's previous recordings of these symphonies with the same (but since renamed) orchestra, I summed them up as frustratingly uneven: for long stretches inspired, but marred by mannerism, and in general uncompetitive. A decade or so later (by recording dates) there's evidence of rethinking, but the results are still patchy.

The conspicuous success is the Sixth Symphony. Previously weighed down by a lethargic middle movement, it is now compelling from first note to last. That *scherzo* – now a helter-skelter 5'16" as opposed to 6'47" – is if anything too fast for comfort. But that's part of an overall vision of the work in which discomfort of all kinds is a way of life.

Gergiev himself has pointed out that he does not regard it as an option in this repertoire to keep harping on with the same crude struggles. However, there is a price to pay. The opening of the Fourth Symphony now has more onward drive and a little less industrial-strength accentuation, and in its continuations the threads of the texture are more carefully teased apart. But all this is at the cost of the shock and awe that the classic recorded performances (Kondrashin above all) convey. Although the long-delayed second subject on the bassoon feels as though it 'belongs' more than it usually does, it has little of the dazed quality that the finest performances find as part of a more bizarre and challenging symphonic drama. Similarly, the giant cuckoo-calls are tamed, and the crazed string fugue, apart from being less well played than before, hangs fire, its climax further hamstrung – as before – by a jarring application of the brakes. The second movement gets straight down to business but it too lacks colouristic and intonational range – a symptom of a broader lack of

dramatic tension. In the finale, the thinness of string tone again places limits on the musical horizons before any broader issues of interpretation kick in. Here the *scherzo* section is technically ragged, without any compelling reason (such as reckless drive) for that to be so. There is a good deal of dash and flair in the central divertimento but by then the performance, for me at least, is a lost cause.

The finale of the Fifth is remarkably convincing in its initially panicky onrush and there is much to admire in the punchy *scherzo* and searching slow movement. But the very opening of the symphony is fuzzy in ensemble, and balance in the paragraph that follows feels somewhat arbitrary. As a whole, the first movement never comes fully into focus.

Another mixed bag, then, though the Sixth Symphony is undoubtedly a version to be reckoned with. **David Fanning**

Selected comparison:

Kirov Orch, Gergiev (8/04, 3/06) (PHIL) 470 841-2PM5

Shostakovich · Prokofiev

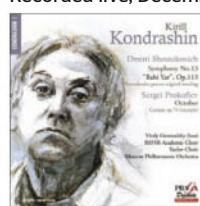


Prokofiev Cantata for the 20th Anniversary of the October Revolution, Op 74^a – excs **Shostakovich** Symphony No 13, 'Babiy Yar', Op 113^b
Vitaly Gromadsky ^bbass, ^aspkr RSFSR Academic

Choir; Yurlov State Choir; Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra / Kyrill Kondrashin

Praga Digitals (F) PRD/DSD350 089
(79 · DDD/DSD)

Recorded live, December 20, 1962



This searing live performance of the 13th Symphony was only its second in public and according to the Soviet authorities it never happened. The bass soloist was ill – not – and the hope presumably was that a contentious masterpiece would slip quietly into oblivion. Imagine this of all Shostakovich pieces slipping quietly anywhere. The poems of Yevgeni Yevtushenko could never be silenced, though the texts were suppressed, and one in particular – 'Babiy Yar', the title of the symphony – would come to symbolise this composer's defiance behind the mask of compliance.

There is no angrier piece in the Shostakovich canon; rarely has the poetry of protest been embodied in music of such astonishing empathy. The bells still toll for Mother Russia but they do so in the cause of social conscience, and no recording of

the piece stares you in the face and demands attention as this one does. Kyrill Kondrashin, his indomitable soloist Vitaly Gromadsky, his male chorus and the orchestra are uncompromising in their rhetoric – and even the 'dirty', coarse-grained recording seems in keeping with the *tinta* of both piece and performance. This is music born of declamation and outrage, and the thunderous delivery of Gromadsky, the rapid vibrato in his voice suggestive of an uncontrollable emotion, seems to reverberate across the ages. There is little or no refinement in his voicing of Yevtushenko's texts, no subtle use of head-voice to soften poignant phrases, though lines like 'nothing in me will ever forget this' sound overwhelmingly first-hand and suddenly, numbingly inward.

The second-movement *scherzo* 'Humour' – Yevtushenko and Shostakovich's secret weapon, the pointy end of irony – has unrivalled trenchancy here: the strident derision of woodwinds and militaristic raucousness of brass and percussion really do laugh in the face of oppression while the shadow of fear invoked in the Fafner-like bass tuba of the fourth movement is nail-biting in its tension, truly like waiting for that knock on the door in the dead of night. I would only question Kondrashin's slightly

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— Lynn René Bayley,
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— Steve Marsh,
Classical Guitar Magazine (UK)

"Delight of the week" – Sept 27th 2013.

— Kara Dahl Russell,
Just Opened on WSCL Radio 89.5 Delmarva Public Radio

hurried tempo in the hopeful transition into the leavening final movement, 'A Career'. Otherwise a startling document of very troubled times and inescapably a reflection of what is happening in Russia at this very moment.

The fragments from Prokofiev's would-be celebration of the 20th anniversary of the Revolution, *October*, seem so ludicrously thin and jingoistic by comparison: the very stuff of propaganda, all hectoring rhetoric replete with megaphone proclamations, sirens and, of course, a sentimental tub-thumping tune for victory. The perfect foil of a coupling. I wonder if some kind of point is being made by *not* printing the texts. That, after all, is what the Soviets did at the world premiere of the 13th Symphony. **Edward Seckerson**

R Strauss

Eine Alpensinfonie, Op 64

Saito Kinen Orchestra / Daniel Harding

Decca  478 6422DH (52' • DDD)

Recorded live at Kissei Culture Hall, Nagano, August 23 & 25, 2012

R Strauss

Eine Alpensinfonie, Op 64^a

Intermezzo - Four Symphonic Interludes^b

Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra /

Franz Welser-Möst

BR-Klassik  900124 (00' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Herkulessaal, Munich,

^aApril 29 & 30, 2010; ^bDecember 2, 2013



Strauss's *Alpine Symphony* is an object lesson in imaginative orchestration, a collaborative musical workout that challenges players, conductor and listeners alike. The opening low B flat provides a telling first comparison, with held horns and clarinets acting as stabilisers while the first bassoon makes its descent joined by phased muted strings, with trombones and bass tuba sounding from a shimmering sea of minims, a passage that's almost as impressive to look at as it is to hear. Under Daniel Harding, clarity is the watchword, whereas with Franz Welser-Möst the mystery proves even more compelling. Both offer us a glorious 'Sunrise'; but when it comes to 'The ascent', Harding favours a more attenuated approach with implied hairpin dynamics. Welser-Möst on the other hand prefers more conventional (and to my mind more effective) accents, though both cue an impressive gathering of offstage horns before the 'Entry into the

wood'. Here Welser-Möst summons imposing darkness, though not as thunderously or as dramatically as Harding, who achieves a marginally more telling *diminuendo* as the moment passes.

Harding's 'On Alpine pasture' enjoys more crystalline air than Welser-Möst's, with plenty of frosted sparkle among the upper frequencies. As to the two superb oboe soloists in 'On the summit', it seems unfair to prefer one at the expense of the other but Harding's princely-sounding Philippe Tondre falls on the ear with seductive grace while the powerful sting of low brass afterwards is more effective on the Decca recording. Come the 'Thunder and tempest', both versions are magnificent, with joist-shaking big drums, but on Welser-Möst's BR-Klassik CD you hear more of both the wind machine and the organ – also, at the very end of the work, the quiet, final downwards-sloping *glissando* on the violins.

Weighing the balances is difficult because both performances are so extremely good. Welser-Möst and his excellent Munich players conjure more of the score's wooded elements, its mists and occasional mellowess, while Harding gravitates more to blue skies, cold air and glacial contours. It's a close-run thing. Then again, Welser-Möst adds the four colourful 'symphonic interludes' from Strauss's opera *Intermezzo*, vividly played. Competition is strong from elsewhere, what with Karajan in Berlin, Haitink in London and Amsterdam, Ozawa, Thielemann and Previn in Vienna, Kempe in Dresden and many more, all of them offering strong varieties of tonal splendour. But of the two versions under review I would favour Daniel Harding and his Saito Kinen players, albeit only by a very narrow margin. **Rob Cowan**

Alpensinfonie – selected comparisons:

Staatskapelle Dresden, Kempe (10/73^R, 12/92^R)

(WACL) 431780-2 or (BRIL) 7591

BPO, Karajan (12/81^R, 6/93) (DG)

439 017-2GHS or 474 281-2GX2

RCO, Haitink (4/86^R, 7/86) (PHIL) 416 156-2PH

VPO, Previn (9/90) (TELA) CD80211

VPO, Ozawa (10/97^R) (DECC) 478 2358DB11

VPO, Thielemann (6/01) (DG)

469 519-2GH or 479 1426GM2

LSO, Haitink (4/10) (LSO) LSO0689

Stravinsky

Petrushka (1911 version). The Rite of Spring

Les Siècles / François-Xavier Roth

Les Siècles Live/Musicales Actes Sud  ASM15

(69' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Arsenal, Metz,

MC2, Grenoble, and Alte Oper, Frankfurt,

May & September 2013



François-Xavier Roth and his highly responsive cohorts give us a strikingly

fresh-faced, wonderfully vibrant *Petrushka* in its original 1911 guise, lent extra transparency and individuality by the deployment of French-made instruments from the era. For a taster of the intriguingly different colour palette on offer, beam to the 'Peasant with bear' episode in the final tableau, where clarinets and tuba howl in anguish over menacingly insistent cellos and basses (tr 22, from 2'28"). There's also a terrific rhythmic élan when required, most exhilaratingly evident during those boundlessly energetic measures that cap the 'Dance of the Coachmen' (tr 23, from 1'25" – I defy you to keep still!). Not only does Roth evince a sure dramatic instinct and considerable interpretative nous but he also distils a very real sense of pathos in the ballet's inspired closing pages.

The companion account of *The Rite*, too, brings much that is both enjoyable and stimulating. In the detailed booklet, the conductor describes the many hours of painstaking research that preceded the present recreation of what this trailblazing score might have sounded like at its scandalous Paris premiere on May 29, 1913. The hard work has certainly paid off, for Roth's is a lucid, bracingly agile and tastefully intelligent conception, studded with newly minted observation. If not always packing as visceral a wallop as some might wish (in the 'Danse sacrale' Roth shrewdly tempers the brutality), it's a reading with keen narrative flair as well as a most agreeable whiff of greasepaint to command it – I for one appreciate its unstinting honesty and the total absence of slick virtuosity or vulgar spectacle.

This admirably engineered coupling has been assembled from at least three different live performances and venues, though you'd never guess it. Summing up, an enormously invigorating pairing, guaranteed to stir the imagination.

Andrew Achenbach

Borusan İstanbul Philharmonic Orchestra

Balakirev Islamey (orch Lyapunov) Erkin

Koçecik İppolitov-Ivanov Caucasian Sketches, Op 10 - No 2, In a Village; No 4, Procession of the Sardar Rimsky-Korsakov Sheherazade, Op 35

Borusan İstanbul Philharmonic Orchestra /

Sascha Goetzel

Onyx  ONYX4124 (72' • DDD)



The Borusan Istanbul Philharmonic Orchestra (Borusan is the group of companies that sponsored it) has in its 15 years of existence developed into a fine ensemble, concentrating so far in its recordings on works that have some kind of oriental provenance – never mind if that invites the pejorative charge of Orientalism. Rimsky-Korsakov's *Sheherazade* is an obvious candidate for inclusion. It is a work that well demonstrates the orchestra's virtues, which include not only a fine set of principals who have their individual voices in the brightly hued scoring but an overall warmth of tone and precision of ensemble and intonation that are hard won by newly formed orchestras. This is an attractive performance, vigorous of impulse and, in the third movement, which the composer at one stage designated 'The Young Prince and Princess', pleasantly sensuous. The performance makes its own contribution by linking pairs of movements with plucked chords picking up the closing harp chords, perhaps suggesting that the narrating princess is, bard-like, readying herself for the next telling of a tale. It may be uncanonical but it is a nice idea.

Balakirev's *Islamey*, in Lyapunov's virtuoso orchestration, makes a natural companion, not least since one of its themes was picked up by Rimsky-Korsakov in *Sheherazade*, and Sascha Goetzel takes it at full tilt here. Two of Ippolitov-Ivanov's colourful picture-postcard *Caucasian Sketches* also fit naturally into the proceedings. So far, and this is its third on Onyx, the orchestra has not made recordings of Turkish music. The brief and rather noisy suite by Ulvi Cemal Erkin (1906-72), hung about with clatters of percussion and wailing oriental scales with augmented intervals, seems an odd choice for the orchestra's unquestionable excellence and seriousness of purpose.

John Warrack

'The Bach Sons'

'Piano Concertos - Piano Pieces'

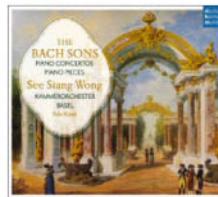
CPE Bach Keyboard Concerto, Wq23 H427^a. Solfeggio No 2, Wq117/2 H220. **CPE Bachs** Empfindungen, H300. Keyboard Piece, Wq117/1 H241. Keyboard Sonata, Wq49/1 H30 **JC Bach** Keyboard Concerto, T301/4^a. Keyboard Sonata, Op 17 No 5 T342/1 **JCF Bach** Keyboard Concerto, BR C30^a. Allegretto con variazioni, 'Ah, vous dirai-je, maman', BE A45 **JS Bach/Hess** Jesu, joy of man's desiring **WF Bach** Keyboard Concerto,

Fk41^a. Keyboard Sonata, Fk9. Polonaise, Fk12/10

See Siang Wong *pf*

Basle Chamber Orchestra / Yuki Kasai

Deutsche Harmonia Mundi (2) 88883 73463-2 (145' • DDD)



On the face of it, this conspectus of keyboard works by JS Bach's most talented sons should help the uninitiated sort their WF from their JC and their CPE from their JCF. The sons – Wilhelm Friedemann and Carl Philipp Emanuel, and their younger half-siblings Johann Christoph Friedrich and Johann Christian – spanned two generations and drastically different musical outlooks. You wouldn't guess it, though, from the F minor Keyboard Concerto attributed to the youthful Johann Christian. The evidence for JC's authorship is slender; and listening blind to this nervily angular music, you might think you'd stumbled on a less-than-inspired piece of Carl Philipp Emanuel's. On a higher plane, the soulful *Andante* and explosive finale of JCF's A major Concerto sound like a tribute to CPE. Elsewhere the sons conform more or less to type: JCF in variations on 'Ah, vous dirai-je, maman' (aka 'Twinkle, twinkle, little star') that rival Mozart's in urbane inventiveness, JC in a shapely keyboard sonata, WF in an idiosyncratic mix of contrapuntal textures and *galant* gestures, often with an underlying restless melancholy.

Much of the finest music here, though, is by Carl Philipp Emanuel, above all the fiery D minor Concerto of 1748 and the brooding, harmonically audacious F sharp minor Fantasia of four decades later. The Dutch-born pianist See Siang Wong's enthusiasm for CPE and his siblings is manifest in the (poorly translated) booklet interview. He certainly catches the astringent brilliance of the D minor Concerto and the nagging obsessiveness in the first movement of WF's concerto. But there is an uncomfortable sonic discrepancy between the lithe, spare-toned Basle Chamber Orchestra (comprising just 13 strings) and the forwardly recorded Steinway B. With the ear subconsciously expecting a harpsichord, the solo entry in the CPE Bach concerto comes as quite a shock. Textural clarity in the rapid passagework is not always ideal. Beyond this, I wish that See Siang Wong had dared a more vivid palette of tone colour and dynamics. His playing is never less than musical and alert. But turn to Danny Driver's two discs of CPE Bach (Hyperion,

IN THE STUDIO

An inside view of who's before the microphones, with a Dutch twist

• Bach from Bunnik

The next offering from the Vivat label will be a recording of Bach's Cello Suites made at De Oude Dorpskerk in Bunnik, Holland, by **Viola de Hoog**. In the sessions earlier this year, de Hoog played two different instruments: a Guadagnini from 1750 and, for the Sixth Suite, a five-string Bohemian cello from c1780, restored by Guust Francois in 2012. The disc is released in October.

• Bruckner from Amsterdam

Staying in Holland, the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra will issue recently recorded live performances of Bruckner's Sixth and Seventh Symphonies under Chief Conductor **Mariss Jansons**. Look out for the own-label disc in November.



• Netherlands Phil Mahler

Down the road from the Concertgebouw at the Beurs van Berlage, the Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra and soprano Elizabeth Watts have recorded Mahler's Fourth Symphony under regular conductor **Marc Albrecht** (pictured). Pentatone will release the resulting disc in spring 2015.

• Brahms from Daniel Reuss

Cappella Amsterdam have recorded a selection of choral works by Brahms for Harmonia Mundi. **Daniel Reuss** conducted his singers in works including the *Schicksalslied*, Op 54, the Two Motets, Op 74 and the *Fünf Gesänge*, Op 104. The disc will be issued in November next year.

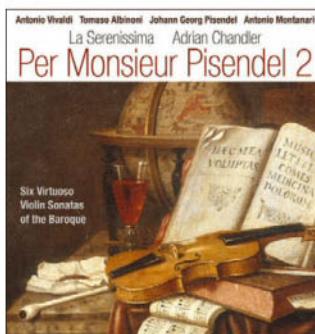
• Song from Stotijn

Dutch mezzo **Christianne Stotijn** has joined friends and colleagues for a disc of songs by Bridge, Butterworth, Vaughan Williams, Martin, Röntgen, de Kanter and more. Her collaborators on Onyx include viola player Antoine Tamestit and the Oxalys Ensemble. The disc is out this autumn.



ADRIAN CHANDLER LA SERENISSIMA

Per Monsieur Pisendel 2

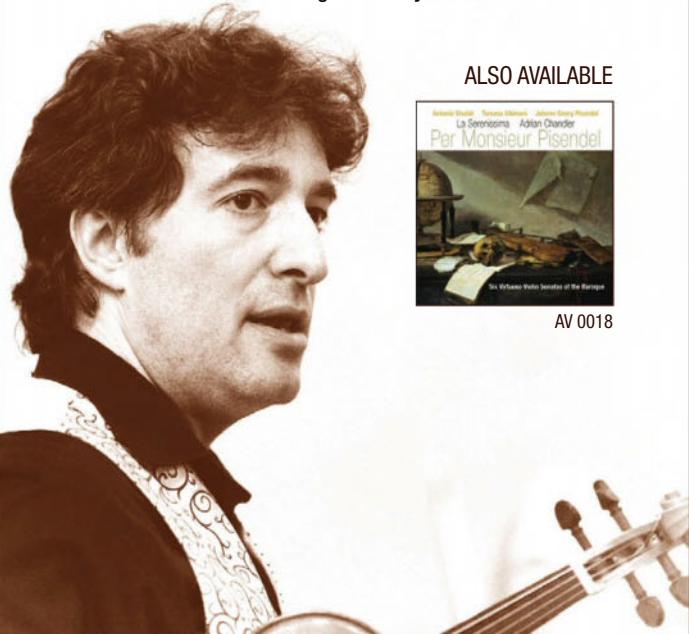


Albinoni
Montanari
Pisendel
Vivaldi

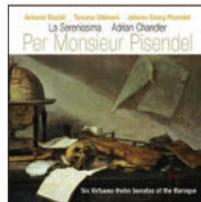
La Serenissima
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Gareth Deats, cello
Thomas Dunford, theorbo
Robert Howarth,
harpsichord

AV 2308

In 2003, Adrian Chandler and La Serenissima released their debut album, *Per Monsieur Pisendel*, launching a recording career that has earned international plaudits, awards and recognition as one of the world's leading authorities on the music of Vivaldi and his Italian baroque contemporaries. With *Per Monsieur Pisendel 2*, the period-instrument ensemble harks back to their debut, performing violin sonatas by Vivaldi, Albinoni, Pisendel and Montanari with stunning virtuosity.



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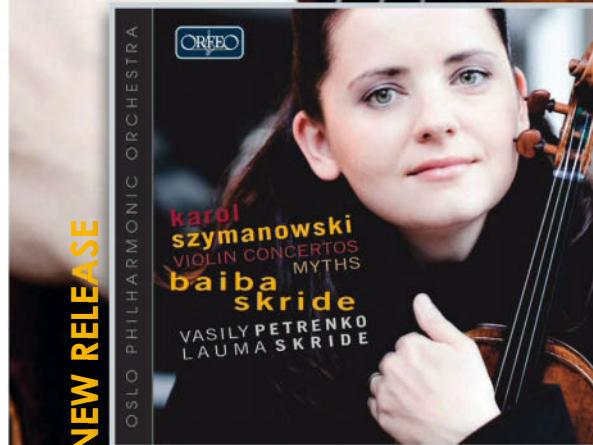
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Richard Wigmore

'Balkan Fever'

Enescu Romanian Rhapsody No 1, Op 11 No 1.

Balkan Music and Trio Improvisations

^aMDR Leipzig Radio Symphony Orchestra / Kristjan Järvi with Theodosii Spassov *kaval*

Vlatko Stefanovski, Miroslav Tadić *gtrs*

Naïve ^aV5395 (76' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Gewandhaus, Leipzig



This is fun, primarily because of a touch of 'premature congratulation'

towards the end of Enescu's First *Romanian Rhapsody*. The ever-resourceful Kristjan Järvi and his MDR Leipzig players lay on the spice with a vengeance, push the dance element too; but, come the pause before the tangy, upbeat coda, the audience suddenly bursts into applause, thinking (one assumes) that the piece is over. When it starts up again, Järvi, his players and the audience make a virtue of necessity and prompt a happily rioting finale.

The rest of the programme consists of improvised or orchestrated music from the Balkan region, the improvisations involving the guitarists Vlatko Stefanovski and Miroslav Tadić, with kaval player Theodosii Spassov (a kaval, by the way, is a chromatic end-blown flute traditionally played throughout the region). Aside from the trio improvisations, there's Balkan music with guitars, kaval and orchestra, most of the arrangements by Spassov. All goes well while the notes are aflame but as soon as the music lapses into bland, panpipes-style 'easy listening' mode, my eyes glaze over and I'm in danger of drifting into an esoteric land of nod (try *Eleno*, tr 6, for size). Aside from the Enescu (which is worth hearing, albeit once or twice), the best tracks are *Fire Feast* (tr 10) and the closing *Gypsy Dance*. Good as it is to hear the Leipzig band entering into the eastern fray, there's too much flesh on the bones here, not enough pulsing red blood or flexing of muscle. I'd treat it like a one-off concert then pass it to a friend. Clear, vivid sound. Rob Cowan

'Ballet Music'

Busoni *Tanz-Walzer*, Op 53 *Korngold*

Straussiana *Liszt Mephisto Waltz No 1*, 'Der Tanz in der Dorfschenke', S514 *Schreker Ein Tanzspiel*
R Strauss *Der Rosenkavalier* - Waltz Sequence

No 1. *Salome* - Dance of the Seven Veils
Suisse Romande Orchestra / Kazuki Yamada
Pentatone ^a PTC5186 518 (66' • DDD/DSD)



This partnership's debut recording of French repertoire for Pentatone (7/14) left a most favourable impression, which is now enhanced further still by this even more adventurous successor. Kazuki Yamada, the OSR's dynamic young Principal Guest Conductor, draws playing of felicitous polish, captivating flexibility and winning application throughout what is a most imaginative, distinctly moreish programme; indeed, on first acquaintance, I listened to the whole disc twice for sheer pleasure!

Two of the three comparative rarities chosen by Yamada were designed as tributes to the Waltz King: Korngold's fetching *Straussiana* (his orchestral swansong from 1953) draws upon material from the 1892 opera *Ritter Pázmán* and its three linked dance-movements (a polka, mazurka and waltz) really do fall on the ear in most ingratiating fashion, while Busoni's hugely engaging *Tanz-Walzer* (completed in October 1920 and premiered by the composer and the BPO the following January) serves up a wealth of canny resourcefulness and spicy harmonic incident. Written in 1908 but not orchestrated until 1920, Schreker's *Ein Tanzspiel* comprises a lusciously romantic, gorgeously decadent 12-minute suite in four movements, its very Viennese glitter, opulence and glow savoured here.

No grumbles, either, with Yamada's superbly attentive and disarmingly spontaneous handling of the Dance of the Seven Veils from *Salome* or his conspicuously lissom, beamingly affectionate way with the *Rosenkavalier* waltz sequence. All of which just leaves Liszt's *Mephisto Waltz* No 1, which emerges as freshly as the day it was conceived in this excitingly clean-limbed, infectiously communicative account. Tremendous sound, too, from the Pentatone production team working in the marvellously accommodating acoustics of Geneva's Victoria Hall. An undoubtedly treat – and more soon, please. Andrew Achenbach

'Concertos Parlando'

Dvarionas *Pezzo elegiaco*, 'By the Lake'^a

Shchedrin *Concerto Parlando*^b Prokofiev *Five Melodies*, Op 35bis (orch Prokofiev/Shchedrin)^a

Tchaikovsky *Violin Concerto*, Op 35^a

Philippe Graffin *vn*^b Martin Hurrell *tpt*

^bBBC Symphony Orchestra / Mikhail Agrest;

Lithuanian National Philharmonic Orchestra /

Robertas Šervenikas

Cobra ^a COBRA0040 (78' • DDD)

^aRecorded live 2008



It's always rewarding to encounter a musician of the calibre and risk-taking flair of Philippe Graffin. Rest assured, there are no half measures nor any whiff of stale routine here: his is playing of maximum conviction, strong personality and sparky temperament, in which nothing is taken for granted. In short, he always makes you listen, and he certainly extracts every ounce of eloquence and intensity from Rodion Shchedrin's *Concerto Parlando* for violin, trumpet and strings. The present live performance, recorded in February 2008 and emanating from the BBC SO's Maida Vale home, comprised the work's British premiere and reflects great credit on everyone involved. Tipped off by cellist Raphael Wallisch that Prokofiev had orchestrated the second of his own five gorgeous *Mélodies*, Op 35, Graffin wasted no time in requesting Shchedrin to score the remaining four movements (and which he does to exquisitely idiomatic effect, too).

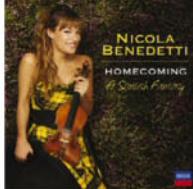
Elsewhere, Balys Dvarionas's 1946 *Pezzo elegiaco* entitled *By the Lake* makes a most fetching curtain-raiser, and this enterprising and generous programme concludes with an uncommonly thoughtful and abundantly recreative account of Tchaikovsky's Concerto, made all the more distinctive by the inclusion of Eugène Ysaÿe's (by the sound of it fiendishly challenging) first-movement cadenza. Graffin's playing touches real heights both here and in the meltingly beautiful 'Canzonetta' centrepiece, though the awkward seven seconds of complete silence preceding the finale makes a mockery of Tchaikovsky's *attacca subito* marking and suggests that something may have gone awry in the editing suite. That lone blip aside, production and presentation are first-class, and admirers of this characterful and articulate fiddler will need no further prompting from me. Andrew Achenbach

'Homecoming'

A Scottish Fantasy'

Bruch *Scottish Fantasy*, Op 46^a Burns *Ae fond kiss*^a Auld lang syne^a Loch Lomond^a. My love is like a red, red rose^a Cunningham *Aberlady*^b. The gentle light that wakes me^b Skinner *The Dean Brig o' Edinburgh*^b. Hurricane Set^b Traditional Coisich a Rùin (Walk my beloved)^b. Mouth Music and Tunes Set^b

Nicola Benedetti ^avn/ ^bfiddle ^bJulie Fowlis voc
^aMichael Goldrick fl ^bAly Bain, ^bDuncan Chisholm
fiddles ^bEwen Vernal db ^bÉamon Doorley bouzouki
^bTony Byrne gtr ^bPhil Cunningham acco ^bJames
 Macintosh perc ^aBBC Scottish Symphony
 Orchestra / **Rory MacDonald**
 Decca  478 6690DH (76' • DDD)



Nothing becomes
 Bruch's *Scottish Fantasy* more than
 those opening

chords on sombre wind band that seem to echo the twilight world of doomed romance in the historical novels of Sir Walter Scott. Twice repeated, they introduce the soloist, Nicola Benedetti, her violin creeping in surreptitiously before opening up with an expressive response. You sense the music in her Scottish blood but credit to Bruch too, who had never set a foot in Scotland when he conducted the premiere of his *Scottish Fantasy* in Liverpool in 1881.

By wearing the MacLeod tartan on the jacket of her new album, we are reminded of Benedetti's significant stage presence and her undeniable gifts in communicating her enjoyment in playing to an audience. Her assured technique sees her through all the formidable obstacles en route to that energetic finale, with its virtuoso variations based on a tune later adapted as 'Scots wha hae'. The Decca recording could have allowed for a greater presence of the harp, marked *mezzo-forte* against *pianissimo* in those opening bars, which is surely part of the Celtic sound Bruch wanted; it's barely audible until the arpeggio runs in the following *Adagio*. The BBC Scottish SO conducted by Rory MacDonald share Benedetti's rapport with this music, playing from the heart.

In her notes, Benedetti offers an intelligent discourse on the options open to her in adapting and interpreting the indigenous folk-music tracks. Her good-humoured apology, on microphone, to her band at the end of *The Hurricane* reveals a spur-of-the-moment improvisation which is surely welcome. Her infectious way with the reels would brighten up any Hogmanay or Burns night. **Adrian Edwards**

Horizon 5

Anonymous Hodie puer nascitur
 (orch MacMillan) ^a. **Glanert** Insomnium ^b.
Rijnvoss Antarctique ^c. **Saariaho** Circle Map ^d.
de Vries Providence ^e.
^dArshia Cont spkr ^aHuelgas Ensemble / Paul Van
 Nevel; Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra / ^aMartyn

Brabbins, ^{cd}**Susanna Mälkki**, ^e**David Robertson**,
^b**Markus Stenz**
 RCO Live  RCO14001 (88' • DDD/DSD)
 Recorded live at the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam,
^bNovember 15 & 16, 2011; ^eJanuary 27, 2012;
^aApril 13, 2012; ^{cd}June 22 & 23, 2012



In this latest collection of RCO commissions or co-commissions, the two longest works

– by Kaija Saariaho and Detlev Glanert – make full use of the opulent sound resources available. Saariaho's *Circle Map* is particularly whole-hearted in its richly orchestrated exoticism; and while her use of short Persian texts (spoken, not sung) acknowledges an inevitable dissonance between speech and music, those texts are very much the junior partner. Highly atmospheric in themselves, they sketch in moods and visions that the music is well able to create and sustain on its own. The title of Glanert's *Insomnium* might lead you to expect something darker and more expressionistic than Saariaho's 'poem of ecstasy' but the effect is surprisingly genteel, as if the composer was never fully engaged by the task in hand.

After a short 'introit' in the form of James MacMillan's well-crafted arrangement of a late-medieval antiphon, the disc's strengths are best represented by a pair of works by Dutch composers. Richard Rijnvoss could be accused of being overly cinematic in his depiction of an implacably inhospitable Antarctic snowscape but he rings sufficient changes on his 12-times repeated chordal formulas to make for a bracing 13-minute musical journey. Best of all, Klaas de Vries's idea of juxtaposing two very different kinds of music – one inspired by Alain Resnais's art-house movie *Providence* (1977), the other celebrating soul singer James Brown – brings a range of new and unexpected shades to the RCO's sumptuously homogeneous instrumental palette. With its roster of star conductors specialising in contemporary music, and recordings of superfine technical quality, this well-filled disc provides satisfaction and provocation in equal measure. **Arnold Whittall**

'Végh in Hungary'

Beethoven Overture 'Coriolan', Op 62
Haydn Symphony No 103, 'Drumroll'
Mozart Symphony No 35, 'Haffner', K385
Schubert Symphony No 9, 'Great', D744
Camerata Salzburg / Sándor Végh
 Budapest Music Centre  BMC194 (114' • DDD)
 Recorded live 1993/95



In my experience there are only two conductors who could have delivered these pungent, characterful and lovingly played performances, Pablo Casals and Sándor Végh. Take the minuscule dramatic pause at 2'58" into *Coriolan*, the archer poised to let his arrow fly, yet somehow it works and the playing is superb. The ceremonious opening of Mozart's *Haffner* Symphony is muscular and broadly paced, the *Andante* that follows patient and expressively drawn, which makes the swift *Minuet* and punchy closing *Presto* doubly effective.

As to Haydn's *Drumroll* Symphony, I should warn readers about two sources of irritation. The first is the amount of coughing that bothers the opening of the *Andante* second movement. This is a great pity because Végh is at pains to draw out the solemn bass-line for those opening bars. Also, in the same movement, in case you check the timing and think that 8'56" is inordinately slow for the *Minuet*, you would be right. The reason for the timing hiccup is that track 8 actually starts three-quarters of the way through the *Andante*, thus 'adding' an extra four or so minutes to the *Minuet* (at least in theory).

Back in 2010 a Végh collection of selected Schubert symphonies (formerly) on Capriccio featured as 'one of the 250 greatest classical recordings, as selected for *Gramophone* by more than 30 leading musicians' (6/10, page 31). 'Collegiate music-making in Schubert' was the appended critical comment (page 38), a not inappropriate description. This Budapest recording of the 'Great' C major is, like its Capriccio alternative, full of energy and personality. The dramatic high points in the second and fourth movements make their full effect and the *Scherzo* and finale are rhythmically driven, while the transition into the middle section of the *Andante con moto* is marginally subtler in the version under review. Recording-wise, Capriccio offers a more consistent sound frame, but the musical virtues of both performances are never in doubt. As a matter of interest, comparing one with the other, the movement timings are virtually identical. **Rob Cowan**

Schubert – selected comparison:
 Camerata Salzburg, Végh (PHOE) 437PHOENIX

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REISSUES

Strauss by Strauss & Krauss

Richard Osborne on two historic 150th anniversary sets – Richard Strauss as conductor and Strauss conducted by one of his most loyal champions

Krauss for Strauss' used to be the watchword and after hearing these superbly characterised Strauss recordings which **Clemens Krauss** made with the Vienna Philharmonic for Decca in 1950-53 one is reminded why.

The son of a dancer turned singer who was got with child by an imperial grandee, Clemens Krauss grew up in Vienna in the years immediately preceding the First World War. Viennese culture and Viennese style oozed from his every pore. In 1922 Strauss invited him to the State Opera; seven years later he effected Krauss's installation as Director. Few composer-conductor relationships have been so close. The two men may have seemed poles apart temperamentally; yet, as these anniversary sets make clear, time and circumstance played their part.

Krauss's Decca recordings were doubly blessed: first by the Vienna Philharmonic, a group of players Strauss himself had known and loved above all others; second by Decca's pioneering frr ('full frequency range recording') which had come fully into its own at the start of the LP era. The June 1950 recordings of *Also sprach Zarathustra*, *Don Juan* and *Till Eulenspiegel* are astonishing for the depth and beauty of the sound. Only when the high strings play *tutti* and *fortissimo* can the sound seem a touch scrawny and lacking in body.

Strauss had been 62 when electrical recording appeared in 1926. Initially Polydor used the problematic Brunswick system. They also favoured Berlin's less expensive (and less good) State Opera Orchestra. (Interestingly, it is the Berlin Philharmonic which plays on Strauss's first 'hit single', his 1928 recording of *Salomé's Dance*.) Down the years,



'Calm overview': Strauss marking time at the Royal Albert Hall

no one has been able to do much to improve these recordings technically.

In London once Strauss spent an hour rehearsing three of his own tone-poems and the remaining five hours on Mozart's Symphony No 40. It wasn't that he was bored with his own music; more that, by the 1920s, he was a long way away from its primal impulses. The calm overview he provided could be spellbinding; and in a piece such as the inexhaustibly wonderful *Don Quixote* there are a host of treasurable insights to be gleaned. (More from the 1933 studio recording with Mainardi than from the 1941 Munich performance which is also here.) But I've never thought the 1926-29 Polydor recordings of *Tod*, *Till* and *Don Juan* were that special.

What is special about DG's 'Strauss conducts Strauss' box are the Mozart and Wagner recordings. Strauss's readings of the last three Mozart symphonies bear endless investigation, as do his superlative 1929 Berlin Philharmonic accounts of the *Tristan* Prelude (a small masterclass in Wagner-conducting) and the Overture to *Der fliegende Holländer*. His 1928 Beethoven Fifth Symphony is adrenalin-fuelled to the point of destabilisation but an ill-recorded 1926 Beethoven Seventh is a fiasco, by turns plodding and rushed, with a ruinous cut in the finale.

It was *Gramophone*'s Deryck Cooke who wrote of the 'fiery urgency, super-subtle wit and insidious sensuality' of Krauss's Strauss conducting. That is brilliantly put. What one notices most here is how wonderfully characterised everything is. Strauss never recorded *Aus Italien* but DG includes his accounts of *Ein Heldenleben* (Munich, 1941) and *Le bourgeois gentilhomme* (Berlin, 1930). Krauss's Vienna Philharmonic versions trump both.

'In Strauss's *Don Quixote*, there are a host of treasurable insights to be gleaned'

I am pleased Decca has included the complete *Salomé* which Krauss recorded only months before his death aged just 61 in 1954. The orchestral playing is predictably superb and there is a near-definitive Herod from Julius Patzak. The canary-fanciers never did like Christel Goltz, Vienna's leading player of modernist roles, but Alec Robertson thought well of her *Salomé* in these pages, and rightly so.

In the end, the modestly stated Richard Strauss recordings remain what they have always been, the stuff of specialist interest. The Clemens Krauss set, however, is something else. A snapshot from history as authentic as it is unrepeatable, it tells, as perhaps only close friends can, just what a wonder Strauss was. **G**

THE RECORDINGS



R Strauss 'Clemens Krauss Conducts Richard Strauss'
Decca ⑤ 478 6493DC5



R Strauss 'Strauss conducts Strauss'
DG ⑦ 479 2703GB7

Handel's last, great oratorio

Harry Christophers talks to *Lindsay Kemp* about the drama of *Jephtha*

‘It’s no wonder *Jephtha* is considered probably Handel’s finest oratorio,’ says Harry Christophers. ‘He always had this insight into character and personality, an ability to dig a little deeper, and there are parts of Jephtha’s character that are very similar to Saul’s. He’s that complex.’ We are sitting side by side at a plain desk in a plain London church hall, from behind which he will shortly be sitting with colleagues to audition singers for Genesis Sixteen, The Sixteen’s development choir for 18- to 23-year-olds. Accompanists are arriving, direction signs are going up, and the tea urn is getting warmer. Frankly, it gives me the heebie-jeebies, but Christophers has no trouble focusing on talking to me about the piece he has just spent six days recording with The Sixteen and a cast that includes James Gilchrist in the title-role, Sophie Bevan as his daughter Iphis, Robin Blaze as her betrothed Hamor, Susan Bickley as Jephtha’s wife Storgè, and Matthew Brook as his brother Zebul. To judge from the way Christophers handles the score, reverently turning the pages back and forth as he relishes its finest moments, he doesn’t feel ready to let it go just yet. ‘There’s no other Handel oratorio in which once you’ve done the Overture you go straight into two bars of recitative ending with the words “It must be so”. The moment you start the piece you know what its motto is, and it comes full circle towards the end of Act 2 in “Deeper and deeper still”.’

Handel’s last oratorio treats a story from Judges concerning the Israelite commander Jephtha, who in exchange for God’s aid in battle vows to sacrifice the first person he meets on his return home, only to find that that person is his own daughter Iphis. In the Bible the story is a thin one, but Handel and his librettist Thomas Morell broaden and deepen it to make a powerful Greek tragedy with a vividly drawn figure at its heart. ‘At the beginning Handel depicts Jephtha as slightly flippant,’ explains Christophers. ‘You know, “I’m a big warrior, I can do anything”. But then by the end of Act 2 you’ve got him in this fantastic *accompagnato*.’ Christophers is already turning the pages to ‘Deeper and deeper still’, the famous accompanied recitative in which Jephtha’s realisation of his predicament hits home. ‘I don’t think there’s anything greater in all of Handel. It’s just staggering in its variety; it goes through every emotion possible, and 15 keys, in 44 bars. The few little markings that Handel gives us – the small daggers over the pulsing quavers



For Christophers, *Jephtha* is ‘one of the finest concertised pieces in dramatic music’

at the beginning of the *Largo*, the sudden *fortes* and *pianos* – are extremes, but it’s also got phenomenal momentum. The “It must be so” idea comes back, and then with the realisation that it’s his daughter who must die Handel loses the daggers and the music suddenly becomes calmer, *Largo e piano*. Then comes heartbreak, then silence, but still at the end that quaver pulse is there.’

Few would disagree that the dramatic heart of *Jephtha* comes in these moments at the end of Act 2 and the beginning of Act 3, as Jephtha ponders his fateful vow and the prospective death of his daughter. ‘Handel has the ability in his great oratorios to write powerful sequences, and the trick for a conductor is how to get from one to the next. The chorus that comes after that *accompagnato* to end Act 2, “How dark, O Lord, are thy decrees”, is in four movements, starting with a typical, very soft, very slow dotted rhythm, like you also get in *Israel in Egypt*. You’ve got some marvellous harmonic moments [Christophers has drawn rings round some of them] and Handel’s got this clever way of gradually building things with imitative points two beats apart. He goes from this to a lilting one-in-a-bar for “All our joys to sorrow turning”, a sort of circular motion full of suspensions and dissonances,



The historical view

Newman Flower

George Frideric Handel, His Personality and his Times
(Houghton Mifflin, 1923)

‘His final oratorio *Jephtha* remained fragrant to till the end, because, as a complete work, it was the last offering of a fruitful life.’

Winton Dean

Handel’s Dramatic Oratorios and Masques
(Oxford University Press, 1959)

‘“Deeper and deeper still” has no rival as a dramatisation of a great spirit struggling against the inevitable. The range of expression is astonishing.’

Percy M Young

Handel (Master Musicians, Dent, 1947)

‘What Handel wrote after the age of 60 reveals the unique genius of the man, and no work more than *Jephtha*, which secretes immortality in an awareness of spiritual adventure and in the expression of the experience of life.’

and then it gets into this anxious chromatic fugue for “No certain bliss, no solid peace”. Finally there’s this staggering closing section where we come to the maxim “Whatever is, is right”, where the musical figure for it just keeps repeating.’

Act 3, starting with another great passage for Jephtha, continues this intensity of emotion, and indeed Christophers says that in concert performances of the piece he is reluctant to make a break between the acts. ‘You’ve had this sequence of choruses, and then, straightaway in Act 3, 26 bars of really quite violent gestures in “Hide thou thy hated beams”. It’s the same idea as Samson’s torments in “Total eclipse”, the same unison feel in the strings and unaccompanied moments for the singer. You can’t help feeling sorry for Jephtha at this point! And that leads us into “Waft her, angels, through the skies”, one of the most famous arias Handel ever wrote, in which he achieves incredible results through total simplicity. I love the way it opens with a theme in second violins and violas low down, and then brings them back an octave higher just before the second section, like a hint of celestial beings. It’s absolutely divine and also so incredibly tragic.’

As if the power of this music were not enough, an extra layer of poignancy comes from the knowledge that Handel,

‘The Act 2 aria for Jephtha is staggering in its variety; it goes through every emotion possible, and 15 keys, in 44 bars’

struggling with his eyesight, wrote on his manuscript in German at the end of the first section of “How dark, O Lord”: ‘reached here on 13 Febr 1751, unable to go on owing to the weakening of the sight of my left eye.’ A further note records a brief return to work 10 days later, but it was not for another four months that Handel was able to take it up again in earnest. After that, completion of the oratorio was an unusually slow process. Two years later, the composer was totally blind.

Christophers has not seen the autograph, which lives in the British Library, but his copy of the score (basically an updated version of the one from Friedrich Chrysander’s famous 19th-century complete works) reproduces Handel’s sorry annotation at the appropriate place. Elsewhere, Christophers has left himself other little prompts and reminders: at the superb Act 2 quartet ‘O spare your daughter’, a masterpiece of simultaneously conflicting emotions in which Storgè, Hamor and Zebul try from their own points of view to persuade Jephtha to ‘recall the impious vow’, he records the opinion of the great Handel scholar Winton Dean (‘Dean is my Bible’ Christophers tells me) that it is ‘one of the finest concerted pieces in dramatic music’, and has run a highlighting pen through some, but not all, of Jephtha’s repeated ‘I’ll hear no more’ utterances. ‘They’re the ones I wanted to sound like outbursts that either frighten the others or stir them into action,’ he explains. ‘Handel gives us a few little clues, a *piano* here and there, that sometimes these are outbursts, and sometimes they are to himself. It’s an introvert-extrovert thing, very personal and very powerful. I think this is a piece that puts a massive question mark over the character of Jephtha, and actually even over the Bible story itself.’ 

► To read Gramophone’s review of Handel’s Jephtha turn to page 90

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Chamber



David Fanning on Bridge Records' ninth Poul Ruders portrait:

'Like everything, the New Rochelle Suite is delivered with refinement, precision and energy' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 66**



Rob Cowan listens to Zemlinsky from the Escher Quartet:

'A performance that probes the depths and surges forwards with a sense of inevitability'

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 69**

Biber



Mystery (Rosary) Sonatas

Sirkka-Liisa Kaakinen-Pilch vn Battalia

Ondine 80 2 ODE1243-2D (125' • DDD)



Heinrich Ignaz Franz Biber's so-called *Mystery Sonatas* are the best-known works of a

composer superficially remembered for the extreme virtuosity of his writing. To that end, they are often paired with the works of his contemporary (and also) Austrian exponent of the virtuoso-improvisatory *stylus fantasticus*, Johann Schmelzer, but the spiritual depth of this cornucopia of musical radicalism was not equalled until much later, in the solo violin music of JS Bach.

This collection of pieces is unique in the violin repertoire due to its use of *scordatura*, the practice of retuning the strings on a violin (and sometimes, even, crossing them over) to produce different effects. It was relatively common practice in the Baroque period but never examined so exhaustively as in the *Mystery Sonatas*. Each one, bar the 'Resurrection' Sonata and the closing Passacaglia, uses it in some form, and there are points at which the music can become almost Bachian in the mystical complexity that arises from it. The effects that result from this practice are alternately painful and beautiful, and the technique of the violinist needs to be perfect in order to do the consequential contrast any justice. If it is not, its technical complexities force any failings of the player to compensate with unsubtle effects; if it is, the virtuosity becomes almost irrelevant and the music dons the sort of veneer of spirituality that it does in Sirkka-Liisa Kaakinen-Pilch's extraordinary performance.

The most daring *scordatura* is in 'Surrexit Christus hodie', in which the unexpected sound of playing in octaves and tenths is given a particularly powerful effect by Kaakinen-Pilch's immaculate tuning. She

also manages a wondrous balance of the folk music with which Biber would have been most familiar with the graceful, intellectual pieces they more readily are. This combination pays all the necessary dues to a unique set of pieces that is full of symbolism, musical extremism and the meditation on a mystery as complex as the 15 mysteries of the Rosary. **Caroline Gill**

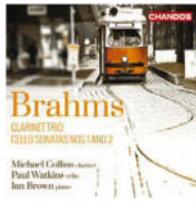
Brahms

Cello Sonatas - No 1, Op 38; No 2, Op 99.

Clarinet Trio, Op 114^a

Michael Collins cl Paul Watkins vc Ian Brown pf

Chandos 80 CHAN10825 (81' • DDD)



Non-committed beginnings, and a whiff of detachment pervades the first movement of the E minor Cello Sonata. Ian Brown keeps his distance, reining in Paul Watkins, whose playing suggests a need for closer emotional involvement. Some warmth pervades the B major third subject but the *fortissimo* climax in the development (bars 114 to 133) isn't forcefully weighty, as it ought to be. Cerebral control recedes to a degree in the *Allegretto quasi menuetto*, returns in the finale but doesn't cross over into the F major Sonata, where a palpable sense of participation prevails. Brown is far more at ease here, his rapport with Watkins closer, their commitment to the surge of the music uninhibited, be it in the opening *Allegro vivace*, the third-movement *Allegro passionato* or the final *Allegro molto*, density of feeling in the *Adagio affetuoso* touching.

Potton Hall's acoustic doesn't always register but cello and piano are justly balanced, and justly adjusted to include Michael Collins as the equal third. Or perhaps he's a little more than that; because by stretching and releasing phrases without corrupting the basic pulse, lightening or darkening notes without damaging timbres, Collins shares with his colleagues an individual impulse to the music. A beauty

of spirit in the *Adagio* recalls Eusebius Mandyczewski's description to Brahms, 'as if the instruments were in love with each other', the following *Andantino grazioso* played with a questing but relaxed graciousness; and the changing time signatures in the final *Allegro* aren't smoothed over. A penetrating interpretation. **Nalen Anthoni**

Vc Sons – selected comparisons:

Piatigorsky, Rubinstein (10/40^R, 7/77^R, 11/99^R)

(RCA) 09026 62592-2

Rostropovich, Serkin (5/83^R, 9/83) (DG) 410 510-2GH

Wieder-Atherton, Cooper (10/08) (RCA) 88697 20187-2

Cl Trio – selected comparison:

Frost, Pöntinen, Thédeén (7/14) (BIS) BIS2063

Dupont

Poème^a. Les heures dolentes – excs. La maison dans les dunes – excs. Journée de printemps^b

Marie-Catherine Girod pf with

Pavel Húla vn Pražák Quartet

Mirare 80 MIR238 (78' • DDD)



Gabriel Dupont, who lived to the age of only 36 before succumbing to tuberculosis in 1914, is one of those late-19th- and early-20th-century French composers whom history has eclipsed in favour of such leading lights as Debussy and Ravel, yet in 1901 Dupont beat Ravel into third place by coming second in the Prix de Rome (André Caplet won first prize with the cantata *Myrrha*). Despite success with opera in his day, Dupont's name has survived largely through his piano cycles *Les heures dolentes* (1903-05) and *La maison dans les dunes* (1907-09).

In these miniatures, as Marie-Catherine Girod shows in these affectionately turned performances of selections from both sets, Dupont expressed an attractive, limpid wistfulness. His illness, which dogged him for his last decade, not only removed him from the centres of musical activity in Paris but also seems to have wrapped him in a mood of inner reflection – by no means



Resurrecting Dupont: Marie-Catherine Girod and the Pražák Quartet offer affectionately turned performances of the French composer's chamber music

always sad, as can be heard, for instance, in the scintillating 'Du soleil au jardin' and 'Coquetteries' from *Les heures dolentes*, but generally with a sense of regret that he cannot completely enjoy his surroundings while encumbered with ill-health.

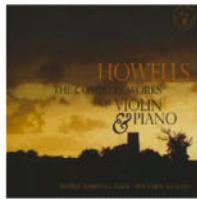
'Mélancolie du bonheur' ('Melancholy of Happiness') seems to be his overriding state of mind. *Journée de printemps* for violin and piano is a beguiling diptych of a spring morning and evening; but not even Girod and the excellent Pražák Quartet can rescue the overlong, suffocatingly overheated *Poème*. **Geoffrey Norris**

Howells

'The Complete Works for Violin and Piano'
Violin Sonatas - B minor (1911); No 1, Op 18;
No 2, Op 26; No 3, Op 38. Cradle Song, Op 9 No 1.
Country Tune. Lento, assai espressivo. Slow Air.

Three Pieces, Op 28

Rupert Marshall-Luck vn **Matthew Rickard** pf
EM Records M ② EMRC019/20 (135' • DDD)



Since the pioneering recording of Howells's three violin sonatas, Opp 18, 26 and 38, by

Paul Barritt and Catherine Edwards in

1993, one further recording of the Third Sonata on Naxos in 2004 and two of the First Sonata on Centaur and the British Music label have appeared. This recording on EM Records with Rupert Marshall-Luck and Matthew Rickard brings all of the composer's violin repertoire together for the first time and includes not only all the miniatures (some of which are world premieres) but also Howells's early student Sonata in B minor, composed for his portfolio submitted to Stanford for an RCM Foundation Scholarship (replete with the alternative original opening and helpfully engineered in order to be heard in both versions). The assurance of this work (1911) of over 40 minutes, albeit overlong and typical of youthful over-ambition, is nevertheless impressive, and its sweeping lyricism, redolent of Elgar and Parry, is uninhibited and abundantly captured here by Marshall-Luck, especially in the tender middle movement.

The structurally more complex and concentrated First Sonata (1918) of less than 18 minutes is an exercise in thematic metamorphosis which is given a spacious reading by both performers. I am perhaps a little more persuaded by Barritt's more languid opening but there is much in the élan of the playing that is intense and

persuasive, not least in the truly heart-bursting *meno mosso*. The Second Sonata (1917), which actually dates from a year earlier than the First, is presented here in its original, more balanced four-movement version edited by Paul Spicer. A fine work and another product of that golden period of Howells's output between 1916 and 1920 (and what fecundity!), it contrasts with the more restless and, in my view, less successful Third Sonata, which, for all its thematic tautness and neo-classical 'wiriness', lacks the harmonic warmth and control of its two predecessors. The various miniatures are delicious, especially 'Pastorale', the touching pathos of 'Chosen' Tune' (both from the Three Pieces) and the hypnotic *Cradle Song*. The recorded sound is splendidly generous, while Marshall-Luck and Rickard evince a real sympathy for this music in heartfelt interpretations that give voice to Howells's personal and much underrated genius for chamber music. **Jeremy Dibble**

Vn Sons, Three Pieces – selected comparison:
Barritt, Edwards (3/94) (HYPE) CDH55139*

Vn Son No 1 – selected comparisons:

Gilbert, S Wass (4/08) (CENT) CRC2922

Bailey, Ozanne (BRIT) BML010

Vn Son No 3 – selected comparison:

Honoré, Rabman (6/04) (NAXO) 8 557188



Thomas Blondelle

Tenor

BBC Promenade Concerts London

Orchestra of Deutsche Oper Berlin / Donald Runnicles
Strauss: **Salomé** Narraboth
30 August 2014

City Halls Glasgow

BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra / Donald Runnicles
Berg: **Wozzeck** Drum-Major
23 October 2014

Deutsche Oper Berlin

Orchestra of Deutsche Oper Berlin / Nicholas Carter
Britten: **The Rape of Lucretia** Male Chorus (np)
15, 16 November 2014

Orchestra of Deutsche Oper Berlin / Donald Runnicles
Shostakovich: **Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk** Sinovi
Ismailov (np)
25, 29, 31 January 2015; 5, 14 February 2015

Orchestra of Deutsche Oper Berlin / Donald Runnicles
Berlioz: **Romeo et Juliette** Tenor (np)
18, 20, 22, 29 April 2015; 2 May 2015

Orchestra of Deutsche Oper Berlin / Steven Sloane
Prokofiev: **L'amour des trois oranges** Prince
29 May 2015; 4, 12 June 2015

Dates subject to change. Photo: Johan Jacobs.

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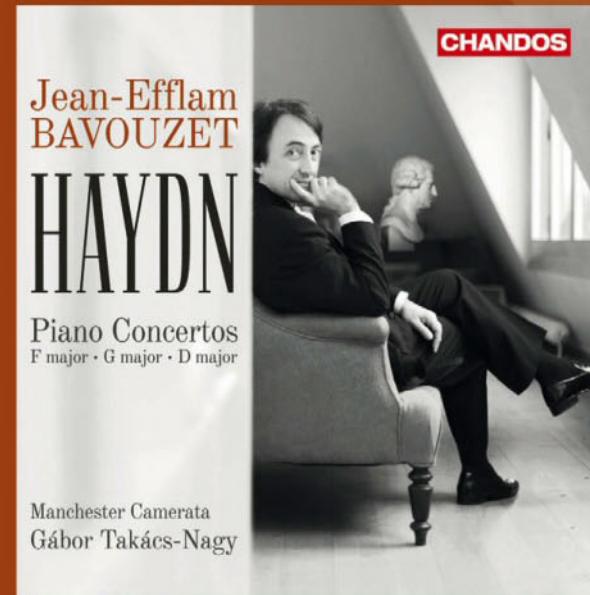
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B Lang

The Anatomy of Disaster (Monadologie IX)

Arditti Quartet

Winter & Winter ④ 910 217-2 (68' • DDD)



In the May 2014 issue of *Gramophone*, I recommended you check out Bernhard

Lang's *Monadologie XII* – the vocabulary of big-band jazz sieved and distilled through Lang's composerly imagination. *The Anatomy of Disaster (Monadologie IX)* applies those same carefully honed techniques of transformation and analysis to Joseph Haydn's *The Seven Last Words of Our Saviour on the Cross*, with Lang subjecting specific bars and melodic cells to computer analysis, the comparison being made to the experimental film-making of Raphael Montañez Ortiz and Martin Arnold, where found footage is edited, stretched and remoulded into new narrative forms.

Lang aimed to write something that was an analogue to the original; a journey to the centre of Haydn's world, taking a digressive walk around, and inside, his material to rediscover Haydn's themes of life, death and resurrection through the process of composition. Winter & Winter's cover art – a crucified frog – would hardly have endeared the label to Mary Whitehouse but the symbolism is well chosen. This most paradigmatic of Christian symbols is, like a frog on a scientist's worktable, probed and dissected.

As performed by the Arditti Quartet, though, *The Anatomy of Disaster* does not quite have the scope it might. Which is not to say a romanticised approach would benefit Lang's piece – an over-emoted interpretation would likely prove disastrous in fact. Each section – the composition is carved up with an introduction and epilogue, with seven imposing 'Sonatas' placed in between – hits a point of crisis where Lang's ruminative transformations lock into numbing, suffocating repetitions and the material awaits rebirth. The Arditti Quartet's monochrome palette has a tendency to underplay this harmonic and timbral light and shade, but Lang's smudged and discoloured tonality, with the very occasional naked reference to Haydn rising to surface, manages to tell its story: the final gesture, an unresolved tonal brainworm that leaves the piece suspended in mid-air, took my breath away. **Philip Clark**

Mendelssohn

'Complete Chamber Music for Strings, Vol 4'

String Quintets^a – No 1, Op 18; No 2, Op 87.



Four Pieces, Op 81

Mandelring Quartet with ^aGunter Teuffel vn

Audite ④ AUDITE92 659 (69' • DDD)



This is the final volume in the Mandelring Quartet's complete survey of Mendelssohn's chamber music for strings, and as its predecessors have proved themselves to be the first elements of a cycle that would be definitive once complete, the stakes are particularly high for this concluding volume.

It doesn't disappoint, with the contrast in outlook and maturity between the early works and their more adult examples as happily apparent as ever in the difference in character and youthful buoyancy they bring out in each. The phrasing, particularly in the slow movements, may be sinuous and sustained but the articulation remains adequately spartan to allow the music to shine through as the art it was, rather than the purely cerebral achievements of a prodigy testing out his new-found skills. It drives Mendelssohn's enthralling musical ideas with the kind of conviction that makes it difficult to turn off this disc without listening from beginning to end. It is recorded with their customary clarity, too, which adds an extra dimension to their performance, particularly in the last two movements of the Four Pieces: in the more muscular passages of the Fugue, where Mendelssohn uses its subject in repeatedly different and increasingly outlandish scenarios, and in the spontaneity of the two contrasting sections of the Capriccio.

Everything the Mandelrings have to throw at these pieces shows them to their best advantage – fleet-footed bowing, tongue-in-groove intonation and ensemble, and a sense of momentum that always drives the music in the right direction. The definitive set is complete. **Caroline Gill**

Monk

'Piano Songs'

Obsolete Objects. Ellis Island. Folkdance. urban march (shadow). Tower. Paris. Railroad (Travel Song). Parlour Games. St Petersburg Waltz. Window in 7's. totentanz. Phantom Waltz

Ursula Oppens, Bruce Brubaker pfs

ECM New Series ④ 481 071-2 (47' • DDD)



Meredith Monk's music for both solo piano and piano duo is rooted in her

unique singing style, which encompasses a wide and expressively varied range of non-verbal vocal sounds. Beneath the seeming 'minimalist' simplicity of her forms lies a wealth of detail, nuance and gesture. The opening selection on this composer-produced disc, *Obsolete Objects*, features quick, rapid flurries in one piano and, in the other piano, ostinatos that play against syncopated bass notes. *Ellis Island* is more harmonically static, enhanced by telling shifts in register and texture. The more propulsive and invigorating *Folkdance* incorporates handclaps and shouts of 'hey', while the processional-like chords in *urban march (shadow)* evoke the plain-spoken yet tangy sound world of Bartók's later *Mikrokosmos*.

Ursula Oppens's strong performance of the three-minute *Paris* incorporates dynamic, tempo and expressive changes that Monk made to the score that are not part of Anthony de Mare's older premiere recording (Koch International). Similarly, Oppens's reading of *St Petersburg Waltz* comes off sounding more foreboding and mysterious next to Nurit Tilles's genial lyricism in an earlier ECM recording. I do prefer Tilles's faster, playful interpretation of Monk's 1986 *Window in 7's* on 'Do You Be' to Bruce Brubaker's more literal deliberation, even though his performance reflects the composer's 2008 definitive edition. So does the 1989 *Phantom Waltz* for two pianos: Brubaker and Oppens's scrupulous austerity brings out the music's Satie-like undertones, yet there's something to be said for the lighter, more conversational premiere CRI recording featuring Tilles again with pianist Edmund Niemann. Still, Brubaker and Oppens unquestionably satisfy the composer's desire to fuse expressivity and restraint.

Jed Distler

Mozart

Piano Concertos – No 12, K414; No 13, K415

Karin Kei Nagano pfs **Cecilia Quartet**

Analekta ④ AN2 8765 (53' • DDD)



Mozart's two piano quartets leave you wanting more in that medium, and these chamber-size versions of two 1782 piano concertos just about fill that need, especially in such intentionally small-scale performances. Typically, recordings of the composer's adaptations are performed like miniature concertos – certainly valid – though this one, influenced by period-instrument performance, accepts the scale

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of Mozart's chamber adaptations more on their own terms. Mozart's musical train of thought emerges in higher relief, especially when played with the comprehension and grace of these performances.

The concertos still don't show Mozart at his deepest and don't sustain one's interest as well as in their full orchestral versions, making this a curious debut recording for pianist Karin Kei Nagano. She's a model of interpretative responsibility, meaning that she maintains a restraint appropriate to the anti-virtuoso path that's been chosen here, though the slow movements are full of exquisite playing with some subtle *rubato*. But what makes you want to hear Nagano (daughter of Kent Nagano) in some future spotlight is the cadenzas: they're hugely witty and brimming with personality.

David Patrick Stearns

Ruders

'The Music of Poul Ruders, Vol 9'

New Rochelle Suite^a. Twinkle Bells

(Piano Etude No 2)^b. Schrödinger's Cat^c.

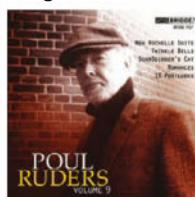
Romances^d. Thirteen Postludes^b

^cAmalia Hall *vn* ^dHsin-Yun Huang *va*

^bDavid Holzman, ^dSarah Rothenburg *pf*

^aDavid Starobin *gtr* ^dDaniel Druckman *perc*

Bridge \mathbb{F} BRIDGE9427 (57' • DDD)



At the heart of this disc are the 12 canons for violin and guitar whimsically titled *Schrödinger's Cat*; whimsically, because Ruders has admitted that the music has nothing to do with the famous 1935 thought experiment, but that he always wanted to use the title anyway. In his essay, the much-missed Malcolm MacDonald suggests that the canons nevertheless fit Schrödinger's paradox rather well conceptually. Be that as it may, the music appeals not so much through its undeniable technical ingenuity as through its constantly self-renewing rhythmic, timbral and textural imagination. Much of it nods towards Stravinsky (*The Soldier's Tale*, the Violin Concerto, *Agon* and so on). The final canon, in an unexpectedly pure D major, itself opens on to the six *Romances*, avowed tributes to the 19th-century character-piece genre but ones that retain an enigmatic core and could be illuminatingly programmed alongside, say, Schumann's *Märchenbilder*.

The *Thirteen Postludes* for piano are perhaps a little surprising in their uncompromising edginess. If anything they feel more abstract than the canons of *Schrödinger's Cat*. But, hearing the disc

as a recital, by this stage the ear is well attuned. David Holzman rips with panache through the short but searing 'Toccata' (No 3), the equally lacerating 'Preambulum' (No 8) and 'Manège' (No 11). These feel like both a necessary physical release from and a provocation to the austere intellectual fancies that surround them. Even so, the isolated Piano Etude No 2 – Prokofiev meets Messiaen – is the one piano piece I found myself most drawn to investigating further.

A special bouquet to David Starobin for his performances in the two guitar works, of which he is the dedicatee. Nothing in the programme is more captivating than the five-movement theatre of the mind that is the *New Rochelle Suite*. This, like everything on the disc, is delivered with refinement, precision and energy, and recordings throughout are beautifully focused. David Fanning

Shostakovich · Szymanowski

Shostakovich Violin Sonata, Op 134

Szymanowski Violin Sonata, Op 9

Frédéric Bednarz *vn* Natsuki Hiratsuka *pf*

Metis Islands \mathbb{F} MIM0004 (54' • DDD)



These works, from either end of their composers' output, make for an unlikely yet effective pairing. Szymanowski's Violin Sonata (1909) is often seen as a product of the period when he was still in thrall to German late-Romanticism, yet echoes of Fauré, Franck and Enescu make its 'French' provenance the more tangible. Frédéric Bednarz and Natsuki Hiratsuka bring flexibility to the rhetoric of its initial *Allegro*, then underline the plaintiveness of the *Andantino* as well as the resolve of the finale when it builds to its decisive close: the piece emerging as formally more cohesive and expressively less wayward than is often the case.

Where Szymanowski luxuriates, Shostakovich ruminates: the latter's Violin Sonata (1968) has often seemed among the most forbidding of his later works and it is to these performers' credit that the speculative dialogue of the opening *Moderato* feels not in the least arid or the confrontational exchanges of the central *Allegretto* not lacking in textural clarity. Nor does the final *Largo* lose focus as it heads to its eloquent climax before returning to those fugitive gestures with which the work had begun.

Those who prefer to invest in these works as part of single-composer discs

could well turn to Alina Ibragimova for the Szymanowski and Isabelle Faust for the Shostakovich. If the present coupling appeals, however, it should be acquired with confidence. Richard Whitehouse

Szymanowski – selected comparison:

Ibragimova, *Tibergien* (7/09) (HYPERION) CDA67703

Shostakovich – selected comparison:

Faust, *Melnikov* (5/12) (HARMONIA MUNDI) HMC90 2104

Vivaldi

'Senza basso' –

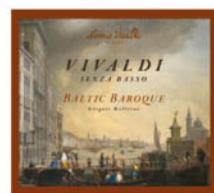
Sonatas for Two Violins –

RV68; RV70; RV71; RV77

Baltic Baroque

Estonian Record Productions \mathbb{F} ERP6713

(47' • DDD)



Vivaldi's output of sonatas for two violins and bass

consists of the 12 trio sonatas of his Op 1, and four other sonatas for two violins 'anco senza il Basso' – that is, with optional continuo bass. And indeed, with the bass-line provided being a *basso seguente*, doubling whichever violin part is the lower at any given point, they can be omitted to leave genuine violin duos to add to the very small number of such works from the Baroque by Leclair, Guignon and Telemann. They have been recorded before: Chiara Banchini and Véronique Méjean from Ensemble 415 played all four as duos (Harmonia Mundi, 4/92), L'Astrée did all four with continuo (Naïve, 4/04) and the Purcell Quartet half and half (on two separate Chandos discs, 9/90 and 6/91). Here two violinists from Baltic Baroque follow the last course, offering RV77 and RV71 as duos, and RV70 and RV68 with harpsichord.

It seems a good way to go to me. The duo-playing of Maria Krestinskaya and Evgeny Sviridov is buoyant, sweetly sinewy, punchily detailed and perfectly matched, as indeed they have to be; Vivaldi's duo style is to write almost exactly similar parts for them, either swapping phrases or following each other around in thirds or sixths (though one violin does make a gorgeous break for glory into a melody of its own in the finale of RV71). Yet four of these in a row might be a little too much, and it is a relief to the ear when Imbi Tarum's harpsichord joins them, adding a touch of weight and depth to the sound.

This music is slight (and at 47 minutes, so is the CD), but it is also fresh, skilfully written and with a creative spark that keeps it always alive. Thoroughly Vivaldian, in other words. Lindsay Kemp



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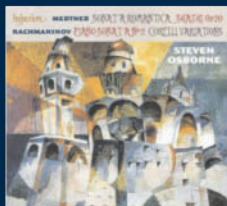
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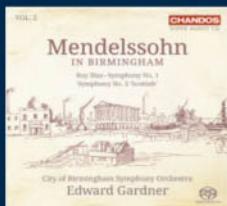
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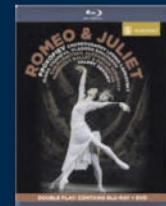
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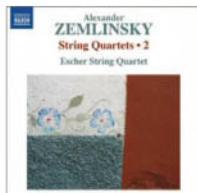
Zemlinsky

'String Quartets, Vol 2'

String Quartets - No 1, Op 4; No 2, Op 15

Escher Quartet

Naxos (8 573088 (75' • DDD)



Interesting that Zemlinsky's First Quartet of 1896 takes on the mantle of Brahms, much as Schoenberg's first completed D major Quartet from the following year reflects Brahms and Dvořák. Both are likeable pieces with one foot in the future, the Escher Quartet on this new recording alert and responsive, certainly warmer in tone than the Schoenberg Quartet (Chandos). When it comes to the complete Zemlinsky cycle, the LaSalle Quartet (DG) blazed the first stereo trail but the Eschers run them pretty close. The pert second subject of the first movement, for example, the whimsical, *Pierrot*-like *Allegretto* that follows and the finale are all strongly characterised.

Carrying along the Schoenberg line, Zemlinsky's Second Quartet, like Schoenberg's First is cast as a sweeping three-quarters-of-an-hour epic, with key thematic ideas nailing the structure into place – music that, in the words of the annotator Marc D Moskovitz, 'is of a deeply personal character, filled with longing, pain, humour, angst and the anxiety of a world teetering on the brink'. When DG issued their LaSalle recording, lovers of 20th-century chamber music leapt with excitement. The Schoenberg Quartet do a perfectly decent job but sound rather dry, whereas the Eschers follow the LaSalle's example with a performance that probes the depths and surges forwards with a sense of inevitability that, given what the century had in store, is 'authentic' in the truest possible sense. **Rob Cowan**

Stg Qts – selected comparisons:

LaSalle Qt (4/79th, 2/84th, 8/89th)

(DG) 479 1976GB6 or (BRIL) 9188

Schoenberg Qt (A/02) (CHAN) CHAN9772

'1919 – Viola Sonatas'

Bloch Suite **R Clarke** Viola Sonata

Hindemith Viola Sonata, Op 11 No 4

Barbara Buntrock va **Daniel Heide** pf

AVI-Music (AVI18553304 (70' • DDD)



It is difficult to find a thread to join any free-standing works for viola; but that its

sound has always seemed particularly well-suited to the between-the-wars, art deco period has provided Barbara Buntrock with a perfect opportunity. '1919' links three sonatas only inasmuch as that they were written in that year; from all other aspects they are vastly different, which presents a fascinating programme.

From the earthy cross-rhythms in the second movement of the Sonata by Rebecca Clarke to the beautiful parallel shifts in its *Adagio*, to the subversive beauty of the Hindemith, Buntrock has a keen sense of the contrasting personalities of these pieces. Hindemith didn't want to be overtly Romantic in this period of his compositional life, yet Buntrock and Heide's performance effectively outs him: the Sonata is a particularly honest work that came during a period of rebirth, so its depth is to be found in its honesty, as well as its skilful economy of language. The Bloch, however, requires less subtlety of thought, being the manifestation of his imaginings of an ancient culture he was never to see. Buntrock plays each with a different tone, colour and depth that displays a mastery of the instrument on a deeply intimate level.

Heide's accompaniment is sensitive and supportive but it is Buntrock who is the star of the show here, if only for bringing to the Clarke Sonata the attention it deserves.

Caroline Gill

'Arioso & Brillante'

Albinoni Concerto for Trumpet and Organ

JS Bach Orchestral Suite No 2, BWV1067 – Menuet; Badinerie. Cantata No 156 – Arioso

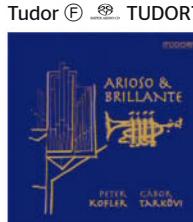
JS Bach/Gounod Ave Maria **J Clarke** The Prince of Denmark's March (Trumpet Voluntary). Trumpet Tune **Handel** Serse - Ombra mai fù

Locillet Sonata, Op 3 **Telemann** Concerto in F minor **Vivaldi** Concerto in F major, RV455

Viviani Sonata prima, Op 4

Gábor Tarkövi tpt **Peter Kofler** org

Tudor (TUDOR7184 (54' • DDD/DSD)



This is the third of the Berlin Philharmonic's solo trumpeter's discs on Tudor and the most engaging. Tarkövi and Kofler reignite this once-fashionable duo. If such a sound world can tire the ears relatively quickly, both players alight sensitively on a deft balance and a simple, *galant* elegance which characterise almost all these works.

Despite occasional expressive nonchalance in the last movements, Tarkövi's effortless *legato* in the slow music is remarkable for its control and congenial

colouring, whether in the measured exoticism of the Vivaldi concerto, a beguiling 'Ombra mai fù' or the yet more exquisite Locillet Sonata. The dexterity of Peter Kofler's accompaniment and admirable rhythmic sureness enables Tarkövi to stand aloft (literally) with his trademark lyrical poise and restraint.

Only in the Viviani sonata does one feel that an intimate set of 17th-century 'caprices' falls between all stools from 'authentic' dialogue to Gothic excess. Yet overall this remains a finely conceived programme. **Jonathan Freeman-Attwood**

'An Italian in Paris'

Bartolotti Chaconne **M-A Charpentier** Sonata

in C for Eight Instruments **Clérambault**

Chaconne in D F **Couperin** La Pucelle **Duval**

Suite in G **Jacquet de la Guerre** Sonata No 4

Lully Chaconne **Marais** Prélude in E minor

Rebel Violin Sonata No 4

The Bach Players

Hyphen Press Music (HPMO07 (69' • DDD)



The title refers to the Bolognese guitarist and theorist Angelo Michele Bartolotti, whose lightweight Chaconne is included in the programme. In contextualising him, The Bach Players offer us the relatively rare opportunity to contemplate some of the lesser-known experiments in the Italian style by late-17th-century French composers. At the heart of this CD is an exploration of the remarkable variety of roles given to the bass viola da gamba by Charpentier, Clérambault, La Guerre and Rebel, which acknowledged the artistry and prestige of the great viol players of the day: Marin Marais and Antoine Forqueray.

We have the italophile music collector Sébastien de Brossard to thank for the preservation of manuscript copies of Couperin's *La Pucelle* and the violin sonatas of all but the Charpentier. One of the gems of this recording is the Duval Suite (1704), which includes a 'Fantaisie pour la basse' (tr 13); the Rebel violin sonata, with its *récits* for the viol, appeared in 1713. Ironically, Marais's *Prélude*, included in his 1692 *Pièces en trio*, makes no concessions to a bowed bass instrument. The Charpentier Sonata is at once unique and quintessential: the bass viol and five-string basse de violon are placed on nearly equal footing and paired with flutes and violins respectively to represent and juxtapose the French and Italian styles, while it elegantly encapsulates the accepted principles of French chamber-music instrumentation at the time.

GRAMOPHONE Collector

MUSIC FOR CLARINET

Duncan Druce reviews a range of discs presenting music both old and new for clarinet with piano, chamber group and orchestra



'A dreamy, meditative dialogue': Ashkenazy senior and junior duetting on the Paladino label

Three of these eight discs feature family partnerships. Husband-and-wife **Jean Johnson** and **Steven Osborne** give searching performances of the two Brahms sonatas. Initially I wondered whether Johnson was too cool a player to do justice to this passionate music but I soon came round to an appreciation of how both bring out the expressive character of every phrase. The tricky finale of No 1 features exceptional *leggiero* playing and the final variations of No 2 are beautifully paced. Johnson performs Rózsa's delightful, Hungarian-themed solo pieces with style and spirit.

The Brahms sonatas also turn up in an interesting programme given by the Austrian **Alex Ladstätter** and his Japanese partner **Keiko Hattori**, featuring a fine performance of Berg's Four Pieces. Gernot Wolfgang's *Open Spaces* is enthralling, with its elaborate flourishes ending with long notes, cast into the void. The Brahms has a natural flow and momentum but lacks the compelling expressive detail projected by Johnson and Osborne.

Brahms's Clarinet Quintet is paired with the Mozart on **Maximiliano Martín**'s disc with the **Badke Quartet**. He plays the Mozart on a standard A clarinet, without the low 'basset' notes. With a bright tone and sensitive phrasing, this is a most enjoyable performance. I found the Brahms less so, mainly because of the balance between clarinet and violins. It seemed to me that the quartet's violinists

needed to be more robust and assertive for this richly scored music.

Also Austrian, **Benjamin Feilmair**, in partnership with his brother **Florian**, offers an interesting programme crossing the boundaries between classical music and various popular idioms. The performances are robust, and full of spirit and confidence. The Martinů Sonatina is fairly firmly on the classical side of the divide; elsewhere the Feilmairs are able to enjoy jazz inflections (Horovitz), Eastern European folk music (Grgin) and Latin idioms (the Brazilian finale of 'Scaramouche' and the delightful pieces by the Cuban D'Rivera).

Emma Johnson and **John Lenehan** have devised a sharply focused sequence of works spanning the years before and after the Second World War. There's plenty of variety, from Rota's 1945 Sonata, blithely ignoring any hint of modernism, to the highly original Lutosławski *Dance Preludes*. The Hindemith is played most convincingly, with an infectiously light touch. The Prokofiev, originally for flute then arranged for violin, is a tall order for clarinet but Johnson is able to meet the challenge of the tessitura and decorations.

Lenehan and Johnson's Prokofiev is more vividly characterised than **Julian Bliss** and **Bradley Moore**'s account, though some may prefer the exceptional polish and precision of Bliss's playing. His smooth tone is certainly an asset in the *Andante*. Of the other items in their recital,

the Debussy is equally convincing in its languorous and capricious episodes, while in the Françaix, Bliss enjoys surmounting all the music's technical challenges.

The Hindemith compilation featuring **Richard Stoltzman** brings together recordings made between 1988 and 2013. Stoltzman has a distinctive sound – rich and expressive – and he's not averse to using vibrato. The Sonata fares best, in a performance that emphasises the work's serious side. The early Quintet, a fascinating piece, gets a fine performance but the clarinet is too prominently placed in relation to the strings. In the Concerto, Stoltzman plays most stylishly but in the full orchestral passages the sound is muddled.

The **Ashkenazys**, father and son, have put together a fascinating programme of fantasy pieces; rarities given life by truly inspired playing. The item by the 16-year-old Nielsen is perhaps no more than a curiosity but all the other music exhibits a distinctive voice. The beautiful Gade pieces bear comparison with the Schumann, the Eschmann often shows a Mendelssohnian intensity, while the immensely accomplished Reinecke set ends surprisingly with a canon, cast as a dreamy, meditative dialogue between the instruments. **6**

THE RECORDINGS

Brahms. Rózsa Clarinet Sonatas

J Johnson, Osborne
Avie  AV2311



Brahms et al 'Open Spaces' – CI Wks
Ladstätter, Hattori
VMS  VMS229



Brahms. Mozart Clarinet Quintets
Martín, Badke Qt
Champs Hill  CHRCDO76



Various Cprs 'Don't Mind the Gap'
B & F Feilmair
Paladino  PMR0044



Various Cprs 'Brave New World'
E Johnson, Lenehan
Champs Hill  CHRCDO84



Various Cprs CI Wks
Bliss, Moore
Signum  SIGCD384



Hindemith CI Wks
Stoltzman et al
Navona  NV5934



Various Cprs 'Father & Son'
D & V Ashkenazy
Paladino  PMR0030

The Bach Players are a polished ensemble and have produced a thoughtfully crafted recital. Nicolette Moonen plays the violin sonatas with empathy and spirit, and the viol player Reiko Ichise acquires herself beautifully throughout. The recording itself lets the musicians down by allowing what can only be described as 'continuo fog' to creep in. Employing fewer continuo instruments, unspecified except in the Charpentier, might have alleviated this effect. **Julie Anne Sadie**

'Leipzig!'

Grieg Lyric Suite, Op 54 **E Hartmann** Serenade, Op 43 **Reinecke** Octet, Op 216 **Svendsen**

Norwegian Rhapsody No 1, Op 17

Oslo Chamber Academy /

David Friedemann Strunck ob

LAWO Classics (LWC1058 (69' • DDD)



When is an octet not an octet? When, as here, the flute, oboe and pairs of clarinets, horns and bassoons are joined by a double bass, doubling the bassoon line in good 19th-century practice. The Hartmann and Reinecke octets were not written with the string part specified, while the Grieg and Svendsen works are given here in new arrangements for the nine players by Trond Olaf Larsen.

The four pieces of Grieg's *Lyric Suite* started out life among the six piano movements of the fifth volume of *Lyric Pieces*, completed in 1891, but three years later Anton Seidl orchestrated four of them as a *Norwegian Suite*. Grieg produced his own, more refined orchestration in 1904, replacing the opening 'Bell-Ringing' with 'Shepherd Boy'. Larsen's arrangement is a delightful composite of Grieg's and Seidl's.

Indeed, delight is the watchword throughout this engaging programme, superbly played by the Oslo ensemble. The group's playing shows a beguiling lightness of touch with no loss of gravity where it's needed. Larsen's arrangements suit the music neatly, Svendsen's *Norwegian Rhapsody* (1876) sounding as naturally in this format as Emil Hartmann's gentle Serenade (1887) and Reinecke's fine Octet (1891-92). This last is the only work in a truly classical-abstract vein, conforming to the conventional sonata genre as typified by a string quartet or wind quintet, and is none the worse for that. Reinecke deserves more attention that he receives nowadays, being more than the pedant who taught in Leipzig (where the others studied) for half a century. Superb sound. **Guy Rickards**

'Love Songs'

'Dedicated to Ensemble Recherche'

Abrahamsen Liebeslied **M André** iv 9

Bauckholt Liebeslied **Claren MBRMMPP**

Czernowin Lovesong **C Fox** Lines of desire

GF Haas Drei Liebeslieder **Huber** An die Musik

Kröll mit innigster Empfindung **Lazkano** Lied ohne Worte **E Mendoza** Liebeslied für recherche

Mozart Adagio, K356 (arr Sciarrino) **Nieder** Der SCHUH auf dem WEG zum SATURNIO: Ein Liebesgesang in drei Bildern **Parra** Love to recherche **Poppe** Schweiss **A Richard** Y al volver la vista atrás se ve... **Riehm** Ein Liebeslied

Ronchetti Rosso pompeiano **Sarhan** scènes d'amour **Schöllhorn** Chanson: Ein Liebeslied mit Ernst Jandl **Schwehr** Notturno amoroso **Smolka** A Marc O R d O S O **Staud** Chant d'amour **Steinke**

für dich **CJ Walter** Angelorum Psalat **J Widmann** Liebeslied **Winkler** Liebes-Lied (Lied ohne Worte I) **Zagaykevych** Blicke der Verliebten **Zender** Alfabet (Kamasutra) **W Zimmermann** AFUGAPE

Ensemble Recherche

Wergo (2) WER6792-2 (146' • DDD)



Nothing here need give Elton John or James Blunt any sleepless nights. For starters, none of these 30 love songs have any words. When the Freiburg-based Ensemble Recherche asked a selection of their favourite composers to write them a short love song to mark their 25th anniversary in 2010, the brief was to compose an instrumental work that teased with the idea that, since the emergence of the post-war avant-garde, the love song had become an aesthetic no-no; 'instead the subject was left to pop, rock and other types of commercial music,' the booklet notes tells us.

The snippy implication that rock and pop musicians have somehow done the love song a disservice is a pity – from the Proustian power of Ray Davies's 'Days' to Janis Joplin's raw 'Piece of my heart', pop music has nothing to be ashamed of. But, of course, the task of composing a love song without words, and possibly with failsafe conventional tonality jettisoned, is not an easy one: when we're in love, cliché is never far away – how to write love music without pressing obvious expressive buttons sets an intriguing challenge.

Some composers miss the point altogether. Had Ensemble Recherche commissioned a set of songs about the Common Agricultural Policy, Mark André's ardently pointillistic *iv 9* for bass flute, cor anglais and bass clarinet would have been a triumph; similarly you might

not want to date Chaya Czernowin, whose textbook new-music scrapings and subtone rustling-based *Lovesong* sounds like she's set her income tax code.

But other composers deal with the issues at hand more resourcefully. Nicolaus A Huber's *An die Musik* presents the musicians with written-in mistakes that they must erase to find the music's pure heart; Christopher Fox's *Lines of desire* showcases a keening viola line that artfully dodges the usual loved-out melodic intervals; Georg Friedrich Haas's *Drei Liebeslieder* likewise compresses emotion as lines journey upwards and beyond – like champagne corks popping out of bottles. **Philip Clark**

'Portrait'

Fauré Morceau de concours. Sicilienne, Op 78

Jolivet Chant de Linos **Sancan** Sonatine

Schubert Introduction and Variations on 'Trockne Blümer', D802 **Sveinsson** Intermezzo from *Dimmalimm* **Younis** Rising from the Ashes

Emilia Rós Sigfúsdóttir fl

Ástriður Alda Sigurðardóttir pf

Emilia Rós Sigfúsdóttir (ERS01 (61' • DDD)



The flute stands out here as being the most flexible instrument in the woodwind family, capable of prodigious feats of virtuosity, and so it proves in the performance of Jolivet's *Chant de Linos*, with its astonishing cascading roulades, for which the piano provides a firm backing. But the programme opens with Schubert's innocent variations on a simple vocal melody, which shows how attractive the combination of flute and piano can be without histrionics. The seven variations are simply devised and have the character of classical variations of their time. Yet the work closes with the composer's most fetching idea, as if Schubert were keeping it up his musical sleeve for a memorable finale.

Pierre Sancan's *Sonatine* again demands great virtuosity from flute and piano alike but has real charm; it also has a haunting slow movement that shows flautist and pianist at their most touchingly sensitive. The two lovely Fauré pieces, *Morceau de concours* and the familiar *Sicilienne*, are no less captivating and just as delightfully played, while Sveinsson's *Intermezzo from Dimmalimm* continues the seductive mood. Throughout the programme, both artists join to create a perfect partnership. The flute timbre is beautifully caught by the recording and the balance is nigh-on perfect. A stimulating disc. **Ivan March**

Seiji Ozawa

Philip Clark on the career highlights and key recordings of a conductor, first championed by Karajan and Bernstein, who has often been noted for his balletic grace on the podium

Seiji Ozawa chalked up his first *Gramophone* appearance in September 1968 with a warmly received pairing of Messiaen's *Turangalila-symphonie* and Takemitsu's *November Steps*; and in a review of Ozawa's *The Rite of Spring* with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Edward Greenfield, in March 1969, pretty much set the tone for how Ozawa has been assessed in this magazine ever since: 'I have never known a more balletic performance than this,' he wrote, 'balletic in the sense that Ozawa makes the music dance.'

Had Ozawa's comely podium manner influenced his view on the performance? EG hoped not, but these two aspects of Ozawa's artistry are anyway impossible to disentangle. My own first impressions of Ozawa were formed by seeing him on film (at Leonard Bernstein's 70th birthday concert from Tanglewood) and quickly I realised that his podium style was unique – a genuine third way between the mannerisms of his two great mentors, the über-Zen Herbert von Karajan and the making-it-burn Bernstein. Ozawa's chiselled, wise-owl face really did look like it had been dropped accidentally on to the slender frame of a particularly graceful athlete. His body moved differently to other conductors, and you wondered how his physical presence on the podium changed the perceptions of those around him towards sound.

And yet the sheer brute physicality of Ozawa's *Turangalila*, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra with Yvonne Loriod (piano) and Jeanne Loriod (ondes martenot), belies that off-the-peg image of Ozawa as fragile conductorly porcelain doll. The fifth movement, 'Joie du Sang des Étoiles', is turbo-thrusted to the point of kinky delirium; but his fine-spun sixth movement, 'Jardin du Sommeil d'amour', does give us an early window into Ozawa's ear for obsessive detail and softer-than-soft textures.

His actual debut on disc

was as one of two assistant conductors (the other was Maurice Peress) on Bernstein's 1962 New York Philharmonic recording of Charles Ives's *Central Park in the Dark*, and by the time he came to record *Turangalila* in 1967 his rise and rise had become thankfully unstoppable. Bernstein appointed him as NYPO assistant after word came from Berlin that Karajan had a star pupil; Karajan had heard about this exhilarating new Japanese conductor after Ozawa scooped the highly prestigious Koussevitzky Prize at Tanglewood in 1960.

And Ozawa ended up at Tanglewood through a recommendation from Charles Munch. Not a bad list of guiding figures for a nascent talent who, only 10 years earlier, had been

conducting local orchestras in Japan.

Interviewed by the horn player Fergus McWilliam on the Berlin Philharmonic's Digital Concert Hall, Ozawa speaks about another early inspiration, the Japanese conductor Hideo Saito, with deep love and respect. 'There was no background or tradition for classical music in Japan until Saito, who studied cello in Germany before the war, and then came back to Japan,' he says. Also a mouse-click away on YouTube is archival footage of Ozawa interviewing Karajan.

Ozawa reminds Karajan of his advice about how to tackle the opening of Brahms's Second Symphony – 'Let the flute start and the violins will follow.' 'Yes, if it's already running, don't disturb it,' Karajan laughs – a sentiment that could easily stand as Ozawa's own personal motto.

For a conductor of Ozawa's standing, though, his discography is unexpectedly patchy. As Music Director of the Boston SO between 1973 and 2002, Ozawa recorded for Telarc – a fine set of Beethoven's piano concertos with Rudolf Serkin stands out – yet no one dwells on his cycles of Beethoven and Brahms symphonies cut with the Saito Kinen Orchestra

'Ozawa's wise-owl face looked like it had been dropped accidentally on to the slender frame of a graceful athlete'

DEFINING MOMENTS

•1958–62 – Studies and assistant conductorship
Ozawa breaks two fingers playing rugby and gives up on his ambitions to be a pianist; studies with Hideo Saito in Tokyo, later with Munch, Bernstein and Karajan; appointed assistant conductor of NYPO in 1962.

•1973–2002 – Music Director of Boston SO
A biblical span of time for any conductor to spend with one orchestra, and Ozawa's stay with the BSO is not without its controversies. But his cycle of Beethoven's piano concertos with Rudolf Serkin is essential stuff; he also makes a fine Beethoven Fifth with the orchestra.

•1984 – Founds Saito Kinen Orchestra
Founded in memory of his great teacher, the SKO becomes Ozawa's pet project. Among many intriguing programme ideas, music by Brahms is paired with Takemitsu in the concert hall and on record.

•2002 – Vienna State Opera and guest conducting
Ozawa leaves Boston for his first major post in Europe, Music Director of the Vienna State Opera, where he fully indulges his passion for Richard Strauss. He works in Tokyo (with the Japan Philharmonic Orchestra) and guest conducts the Berlin Philharmonic.



PHOTOGRAPHY: SUSE SCH BAYAT/DG

during the early 1990s. But it might be a good idea if they did – Ozawa keeps the rhythmic impetus crisp and taut, while the lumbent shine he coaxes out of his orchestra beams. Also with the Saito Kinen Orchestra came a clear-as-mountain-springwater disc of Bartók's *Concerto for Orchestra* and *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celeste*, reminding us that Ozawa has long relished unpicking what might be described as early- to mid-20th-century tonal-based modernism: Bartók, Stravinsky, Ravel, Debussy and Richard Strauss.

The past few years have been tough as Ozawa continues to battle health problems triggered by a diagnosis of oesophageal cancer in 2010. But the fight-back has started. In June, he led musicians from his Geneva-based International Academy in Bach and Bartók. A chair was discreetly placed on the podium,

but reports suggest he danced and gyrated, using his body to shape the music, and the chair went largely unused. **G** On October 6, Decca releases a 50-CD box-set, 'The Philips Years' (478 7495), of Ozawa's most celebrated recordings for Philips and Decca, ahead of the conductor's 80th birthday in September 2015



THE ESSENTIAL RECORDING

Messiaen Turangalila-symphonie
Yvonne Loriod pf Jeanne Loriod *onde*
 Toronto Symphony Orchestra /
Seiji Ozawa
 RCA Red Seal ® 82876 59418-2 (9/68)

Instrumental



John Warrack reviews a Russian recital from Veronika Böhmová:
'It is all beautifully done, with flawless technique and great intelligence of perception'

► REVIEW ON PAGE 76



Jeremy Nicholas listens to a crop of new harp recordings:
'Magen seems destined to be the Zabaleta de nos jours, with a paintbox of colours allied to fabulous dexterity' ► REVIEW ON PAGE 81

Alkan

'The Complete Vianna da Motta Transcriptions' Huit Prières. Nine Preludes^a. Benedictus, Op 54^a
Vincenzo Maltempo, ^aEmanuele Delucchi pfs
Toccata Classics (T) TOCC0237 (84' • DDD)



I have yet to come across a masterpiece for the pedal piano (Schumann's Op 56 being an arguable exception) but there are plenty of entertaining and fascinating works that merit the occasional hearing. Here are more – but here transcribed for solo piano by the Portuguese Liszt pupil José Vianna da Motta (1868–1948), a labour of deep love by this early champion of Alkan. All are premiere recordings.

What strange, quirky and unpredictable things are contained in the *Huit Prières* taken from Alkan's 13 *Prières*, Op 64, for organ or pedal piano. No 3, for example, is the only piece of piano music I've encountered written on three staves all in the bass clef; No 5 (Alkan's No 8) is not a prayer at all but a contrapuntal march, made obstreperously obsessive by this close recording in a small acoustic. In the *Nine Preludes* arranged for piano duet from Alkan's 11 *Grand Préludes*, Op 66, and the *Benedictus*, Op 54, arranged for two pianos, Maltempo is joined by Emanuele Delucchi.

Throughout there is much to savour and admire – music and performances – on a disc that lasts an incredible 83'30". The essay by the late Malcolm MacDonald is worth the price of the disc alone. Maltempo is wonderfully well attuned to Alkan's unique voice and I'm grateful for the opportunity to hear these transcriptions, though there is no need for any further recordings of them. The fact is that they sound far more effective in their original form – as demonstrated by Kevin Bowyer, who plays all 13 *Prières* on the organ of Salisbury Cathedral, as well as the *Benedictus* and the complete Op 66 on the same ever-enterprising Toccata Classics label. **Jeremy Nicholas**

Prières – selected comparison:
Bowyer (5/89, 9/04) (NIMB) NI5089
Benedictus, Preludes – selected comparison:
Bowyer (1/06) (TOCC) TOCC0030

JS Bach

Die Kunst der Fuge, BWV1080
Cédric Pescia pfs
Aeon (M) ② AECD1333 (99' • DDD)



In his debut *Goldberg Variations* (Claves, 5/05), Cédric Pescia's pianistically oriented Bach-playing was vital and direct. It's now self-aware and pretentious. One telltale sign in *Die Kunst der Fuge* concerns Pescia's habit of beginning or ending specific lines after the beat behind the other voices. He plays Contrapunctus 1's opening subject slowly but picks up the tempo a little bit as the other voices enter. No 2's dotted rhythms are too rigidly articulated to march forwards effectively. Pescia italicises No 3's slithery chromaticisms with sighing *tenutos* and oily *legatos*. By contrast, the brisk and crisply shaped No 4 begins softly and builds to a gradual, uplifting climax. A fast, driving and arguably glib Canon at the Octave follows. No 5 is slow and spongy, in contrast to Charles Rosen's austere inner strength. Pescia's double-dotting in the No 6 'French overture' causes the music to bog down and stagnate. But No 7's expanding and contracting rhythms benefit from Pescia's gentle fluidity, and his unusual slowing down of the final measures makes plausible musical sense.

The Canon at the Tenth is slow, listless and buttery, capped by an uneventful descending minor scale that serves as the cadenza. Nos 8 and 9 lack suppleness, while, by contrast, No 11's dense textures and extraordinary harmonic invention sound newly minted via Pescia's understated animation. The four-voice mirror fugues transpire at a reverential crawl but the three-voice mirror fugues

skip their merry way. However, Pescia saves his crawl from hell for the usually amazing Canon in Augmentation and Contrary Motion: 10 minutes of unmitigated boredom. For *The Art of Fugue* on piano, Rosen (Sony) and Koroliov (Tacet) remain top-choice references.

Jed Distler

Selected comparisons:
Rosen (3/69^a) (SONY) SB2K63231
Koroliov (1/00) (TACE) TACET13

JS Bach

Schübler Chorales, BWV645-650.
Eighteen Chorales, 'Leipzig Chorales', BWV651-668. Canonic Variations on 'Vom Himmel hoch', BWV769
Kåre Nordstoga org
LAWO Classics (F) ② LWC1056 (131' • DDD/DSD). Played on the Schnitger organ of the Martinikerk, Groningen, Netherlands



While there is no evidence to suggest that Kåre Nordstoga is embarking on a complete Bach series, his second two-CD release presents another rich portfolio of the composer's remarkable organ chorales – arguably the least widely appreciated of his instrumental oeuvres. What is required to bring such music into the concert-giving domain was partly broached in Nordstoga's initial foray of Weimar concerto transcriptions and lesser-known chorale preludes (2/14).

This volume celebrates a potent cross-section of Bach's Leipzig organ music, the programme framed by *sui generis* works written close to the end of his life, the six Schübler Chorales from 1748, which Nordstoga delivers with a feeling for timbral definition and unhurried placement. So often over-ambitious and varied registrations can accentuate – dare one say – the more unwieldy features of these celebrated re-creations. Nordstoga allows them both space and subtle colorific variation to speak as a 'set', employing the

alluring warmth of the Schnitger organ in Groningen.

If ever there was a set of Bach's keyboard music that deserved greater dissemination among his followers, then it's the gloriously conceived set of so-called 'Leipzig' chorale preludes. As in his earlier release, one can admire Nordstoga's dignified control and studied consideration in those 'holy grails', such as *Schmücke dich* and *Nun danket alle Gott*, but often I longed for something of greater critical substance and character distinction: how one can 'open' these works out from the loft into new interpretative arenas, without reverting to rhetorical ticks. *O Lamm Gottes* is a case in point, where an eight-minute instrumental journey of breathtaking questing, drama, collapse and hope of salvation is bewilderingly stagnant and unexplored. It is one of those occasions where one fears for a work.

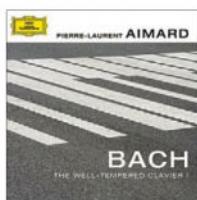
If Nordstoga's *andante* speed applies to almost all the chorale preludes, his reading of the Canonic Variations is surprisingly sprightly. Bach's often dry parlour-game of contrapuntal showmanship (presented to establish his 'scientific' credentials to Mizler's elite university society) is among the best performances of, generally, an admirable but disappointingly unadventurous new compendium.

Jonathan Freeman-Attwood

JS Bach

Das wohltemperirte Clavier –
Book 1, BWV846-869

Pierre-Laurent Aimard pf
DG (F) ② 479 2784GH2 (113' • DDD)



As I've become better acquainted with it I've warmed to this recording, a little, but

I know I shan't often be revisiting it. How do you like to listen to Book 1 of the '48', these 24 pairings of preludes and fugues through all the keys? In its entirety, starting with C major and proceeding to its tonic minor (C minor) and thereafter by upward semitone steps all the way to B minor? The journey takes about two hours, and of one thing we can be certain: Bach would have had a fit at the thought of our listening to *The Well-Tempered Clavier* in this way. For him, the volume was a resource, an exemplary collection. For his pupils it was a vehicle for advanced study, both in keyboard-playing and in composition. The two went together. A compendious achievement, it had the aim of encouraging the student to

learn to play in all the major and minor keys, and in a wide range of styles, while offering to the nascent composer 'models', in both strict and free forms, of all the contrapuntal techniques.

Yet Pierre-Laurent Aimard's recording tempts me to risk the observation that in some countries their reception as 'models', to be handed down to students at institutions along with the teaching methods of such places, has been to the detriment of a more complete recognition of Bach's greatness. Might that not have been true in France and at the Paris Conservatoire? I hesitate to speculate further, since Pierre-Laurent Aimard is such a distinguished musician. But I do wonder, a bit: the finish in his account of Book 1 is near immaculate, if you can accept playing that never utilises the sustaining pedal and projects only the most restricted range of dynamics and light and shade. Yes, there is a little play of colour, but blink and you may have missed it. Clarity of texture and of part-playing are the virtues which predominate, plus a cool atmosphere. Whether or not we think of these as characteristically French, they do bring rewards in Bach, of course; and yet the impression Aimard conveys is of Book 1 as a monument, even a scholastic tract, in a time warp. The gamut of Bach's rhetoric is not suggested; nor is there enough of his delight in craftsmanship and inflections of expression. I miss too a singing style and an acknowledgement of the vocal inspiration that lies behind so much of his keyboard-writing. The notes are enough, Aimard seems to be implying. Do not expect me to offer a gloss.

Best perhaps to dodge about with him, rather than take his somewhat monolithic product uninterrupted. I respond with most enthusiasm when there is variety of sound and character (C sharp major, C sharp minor, A major, B flat minor) and exceptional clarity and technical address (D sharp minor fugue, E major fugue, E minor prelude, F minor fugue). Fugue is a texture and, as we know, the character of a Bach fugal movement derives from its subject. Here, in the longest fugues, when the subject is lengthy and delineated by Aimard a note at a time, with ungenerous shaping and only vestiges of phrasing, we're obliged to sustain ourselves with the effects of whatever build-up of inventive procedures and contrasts the composition may bring (B minor, and the A minor, which goes doggedly from beat to beat and cries out for more differentiation).

Dodge about also, if you can, in Edwin Fischer's pioneering recording of the 1930s, where there are wobbles and lapses

from grace but many marvels. Among modern versions I return most often to the one by András Schiff. Peter Hill's, on Delphian, is I daresay in danger of being overlooked. It is intimate and he communicates as if happy to be playing to friends. Hill is wonderful in Messiaen, as Aimard is, and I just wish Aimard was more interested in playing Bach as lyrically as Hill does. **Stephen Plaistow**

Selected comparisons:

E Fischer (EMI) 623074-2

Hill (DELP) DCD34126

Debussy

'Beau soir'

Préludes – Book 2. *Beau soir* (arr Attwood).

L'isle joyeuse. *Children's Corner* – The Little Shepherd. *Danse* (Tarantelle styrienne).

Elégie. *Etudes* – Pour les octaves.

Valse romantique. *La plus que lente*

Michael Lewin pf

Sono Luminus (M) ② (CD + DSL92175

(69' • DDD)



Beau Soir
Préludes Book II & Other Works
Claude Debussy
Michael Lewin, Piano

Attractively entitled 'Beau soir', Michael Lewin's recital opens with an arrangement by Koji Attwood of one of Debussy's earliest songs. A romantic plea 'to taste the charms of youth before it is too late', it is played with a *cantabile* full enough to make even Gérard Souzay (the song's most celebrated singer) envious. Elsewhere, in a wide spectrum ranging from Debussy's first evanescent magic to the greater abstraction of his final years, Lewin takes a firm if never less than musicianly hand to many of the composer's most fragile and intimate confidences.

Masterly and assured in such outgoing music as *L'isle joyeuse* or the 'Octave' Etude, sweeping away the cobwebs of a more misty tradition, he is less successful in works calling for the utmost in delicacy and evocation. The *Valse romantique* and *La plus que lente* are cases in point and a similar literalism blights many numbers from the second book of *Préludes*. In 'Brouillards', 'Feuilles mortes' and most of all in 'La terrasse des audiences du clair de lune', Lewin steps into broad daylight when he should retreat into the shadows. 'Feux d'artifice' is, predictably, a greater success, with an impressive descent before the ghostly sound of the *Marseillaise*. All these performances are admirable as far as they go but they are too one-sided to go far enough. Sono Luminus's sound is excellent and the expressive, warm-hearted notes are by the pianist himself. **Bryce Morrison**



Andrei Korobeinikov



SCRIABIN

Complete Etudes

Sonata "White Mass"

"Less was certainly more in this Russian's hands"

Charles Lonberger, *Beverly Hills Outlook*

"Like Evgeny Kissin a few years ago, Andrei Korobeinikov is an out of lines person, an outsized musician and a great intellectual"

Judith Chaine, *Télérama*



Yulianna Avdeeva



CHOPIN

Preludes Op. 28

SCHUBERT

Three Klavierstücke D. 946

PROKOFIEV

Piano Sonata No. 7

The first woman to win the Warsaw Chopin Competition since Martha Argerich in 1965, Yulianna Avdeeva here presents her first solo recording, featuring three major repertoire works. From Schubertian reverie to the diabolical energy of Prokofiev by way of the implacable trajectory of the 24 Preludes of Chopin, her composer of predilection, the youthful Yulianna Avdeeva deploys a sensational piano technique coupled with a vivid, expressive, and poetic palette.

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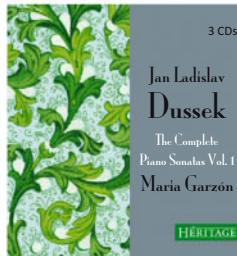
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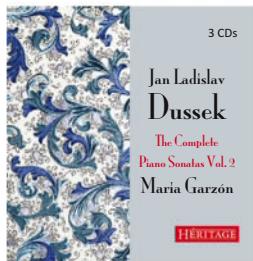
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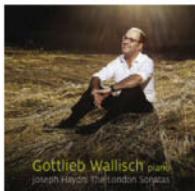
Haydn

'The London Sonatas'

Keyboard Sonatas - No 59, HobXVI/49; No 60, HobXVI/50; No 61, HobXVI/51; No 62, HobXVI/52. Sonata (un piccolo divertimento: Variations), HobXVII/6

Gottlieb Wallisch *pf*

Linn  CKD464 (75' • DDD/DSD)



There's something about Gottlieb Wallisch's stern and spiky reading of the Haydn E flat Sonata, No 59 (old No 49), that evokes Rudolf Serkin's live Carnegie Hall recording. For all its integrity, it lacks humour. That's an issue of dynamics and articulation rather than tempo. Compare Wallisch's emphatic phrasing in the minuet finale to Hamelin's slower yet suppler rendition and you'll hear for yourself. A heavy, charmless voice intones the C major No 60's *Adagio's cantabile* lines rather than an eloquent *bel canto* artist. Its opening *Allegro* is prosaic, square and slow: no doubt to accommodate the treacherous right-hand thirds that both Hamelin and Richter dispatch at a bona fide *allegro*. The D major (No 61) fares better via Wallisch's excellent projection of the *Andante's* woodwind-like bass-lines and his incisive delineation of the *Presto's* cross-rhythmic phrases that other pianists flatten out.

In the F minor Variations, Wallisch's poised pianism, suave tempo relationships and keen attention to the music's bountiful harmonic inventiveness offer much to savour, although some may prefer the wider expressive and dynamic scope of Emanuel Ax's recent Sony recording. If the outer movements of the great E flat Sonata (No 62) ultimately lack Hamelin's transparency and buoyant momentum, one must credit Wallisch's power and propulsion in the *Allegro's* development section and canny timing of the *Presto's* surprising silences. Better still is Wallisch's fluent, rhythmically pointed and heartfelt rendition of the *Andante* in the remote key of E major. Linn's surround-sound production gives a realistic and close-up sense of both instrument and venue.

Jed Distler

Kybd Son No 59/49 – selected comparison:

Hamelin (10/09) (HYPE) CDA67710

Piccolo Divertimento – selected comparison:

Ax (7/13) (SONY) 88765 42086-2

Haydn

The Seven Last Words of Christ

Alexei Lubimov *tangent pf*

Ziz-Zag Territoires  ZZT341 (64' • DDD)



Neither quill nor leather-covered hammer vibrates a string. Rather

a wooden slip does duty for a tangent piano, its strident tones reminiscent of an enlarged harpsichord. And fit to conjure the viciousness at Golgotha in the Introduction and the force of the Earthquake at the end. But the rest? Originally commissioned as a work for orchestra, Haydn used its potential for tonal colour, plastic articulation, subtle dynamic gradations and variety of accent to characterise closely the Words of a tormented man at the point of death. Alexei Lubimov's mastery of notes is impressive, his command of an expressive elasticity that shapes the notes much less so. Despite the use of moderator and sustaining pedal to ease the jangle, a percussive instrument remains percussive.

Stark timbres in Sonata 1 rather sets a pattern, the opening six softly *staccato* quaver octaves too loud and evenly stressed, dynamic shifts from *fz* to *p* ignored, implicit pleading obscured. Sonata 2 is neither reflective nor consoling, Sonata 3 wooden and shorn of nobility. But Lubimov is better able to convey the drama of desperation and desolation in Sonata 4 and the harsh anger at the offer of vinegar mixed with gall in Sonata 5. Closest to pathos is Sonata 7, a performance of greater contrasts, un-damped notes used to evocative effect. In general, though, Lubimov's feel for imagery and poetry is limited. If you need this keyboard transcription – by an anonymous hand – John McCabe (piano) is a finer proposition.

Nalen Anthoni

Selected comparison:

McCabe (12/95) (DECC) 443 785-2LC12

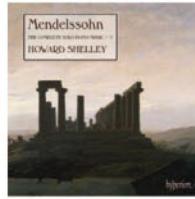
Mendelssohn

'The Complete Solo Piano Music, Vol 2'

Rondo capriccioso, Op 14. Fantasia on 'The last rose of summer', Op 15. Trois Fantaisies ou Caprices, Op 16. Fantasia, 'Sonate écossaise', Op 28. Lieder ohne Worte - Book 2, Op 30; Book 3, Op 38

Howard Shelley *pf*

Hyperion  CDA68059 (74' • DDD)



After listening to a ferociously gifted firebrand virtuoso, though one inclined towards hysteria (Khatia Buniatishvili – see

page 85), Howard Shelley's mix of ardour and urbanity come as a sane and stable relief. And in the second volume of his six-CD cycle of Mendelssohn's piano music, he shows himself ideally cast. His poise and vehemence give substance to even the composer's more facile utterances.

Time and again Shelley makes it clear that Mendelssohn has a special place in his affections, and although it is invidious to locate the finer moments in his unfailing expertise, certain performances stand out for their exceptional grace and commitment. What suppleness and expressive beauty in the *Andante* prefacing the evergreen *Rondo capriccioso*, what virtuosity in the wildly skittering finale of the F sharp minor Fantasia. What quiet eloquence Shelley achieves in the sixth of the *Songs Without Words* (Book 2), where the gondolier sings his plaintive song above a gently rocking accompaniment.

Larry Todd's notes chart the rises and falls of Mendelssohn's reputation, from 'Mendelssohn does not go deep' to Shelley's vital and refined re-evaluation. Hyperion's sound is immaculate.

Bryce Morrison

Prokofiev · Stravinsky

Prokofiev Piano Sonata No 8, Op 84.

Four Etudes, Op 2 **Stravinsky** The Song of the Nightingale. Four Etudes, Op 7

Veronika Böhmová *pf*

Supraphon  SU4148-2 (69' • DDD)



Stravinsky and Prokofiev had a long friendship, if that is the right word for a relationship that was mutually influential but included many catty remarks, excusations and reconciliatory dinners before the next reported insult. Their two sets of Etudes were almost contemporary, Prokofiev's of 1909 following on the heels of Stravinsky's of 1908. Veronika Böhmová has much fun with them, for both sets are really spirited releases of creative energy rather than anything more serious. She does not play down the often-remarked influence on Stravinsky's pieces of Scriabin, a composer and a man he later declared he equally disliked. Both composers set the pianist (initially themselves) a ferocious task in rapid finger technique, here exuberantly mastered.

Böhmová also responds with great subtlety to Stravinsky's arrangement of his *The Song of the Nightingale*. Of course there is a loss, of the orchestrally lush Rimsky-Korsakowian first part and the more sharply

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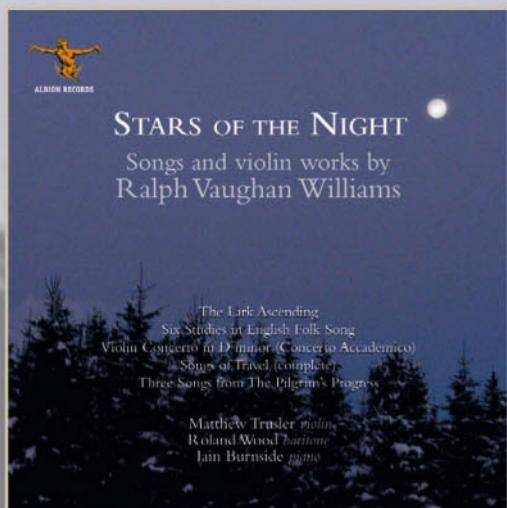
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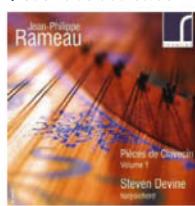
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scored second, written after a long gap. But while the piano arrangement mutes this, it also builds bridges, and there is plenty of colour to be found in some of the most ornate and beguiling piano textures Stravinsky ever allowed himself. It is all beautifully done here, with flawless technique and great intelligence of perception, something also evident in the eighth of Prokofiev's piano sonatas and perhaps the finest (Sviatoslav Richter thought so). Böhmová outlines the gentle, lyrical opening *Andante* with real tenderness, and the *Andante sognando* with a reticence that is more touching than the softer 'dreaminess' suggested by the marking. The final *Presto energico* is as vigorously played as the Fourth Etude, a *Vivace* that was one of Prokofiev's party pieces and could almost be regarded as a study for the sonata of 45 years later. An interesting and attractive record.

John Warrack

Rameau

'Pièces de clavecin, Vol 1'
Pièces de clavecin - Suite in A minor;
Suite in E minor; Suite in D minor
Steven Devine *hpd*
Resonus  RES10131
(resonusclassics.com • 79' • DDD)



For the first in a three-release series surveying Rameau's complete keyboard works, Steven Devine plays on a harpsichord copied from a 1636 Ruckers model. Its sonorities are clear and penetrating yet never strident, and lend themselves both to the music and to Devine's meticulous technique. Take 'La Follette' from the D minor Suite, for example, where Devine shades the repeats with subtle changes in articulation, while imparting a gentle lilt to the rhythm that gives a sense of air between the notes. His *legato* mastery particularly reveals itself in slower movements, such as the A minor Suite's Sarabandes. Here you'll notice Devine's strongly independent hands, and how his minuscule finger overlappings create sustained, vocally orientated lines. This also pertains to Devine's introspective and lyrical way with 'L'entretien des Muses'. By contrast, the first Gigue in the E minor Suite is firmly delineated and detached, and completely different from Céline Frisch's yielding, softer-grained vantage point.

On the other hand, Frisch conveys the A minor Prélude's improvisatory nature more convincingly, and plunges into the

main tempo with a sweep and gusto that contrasts with Devine's slower, more matter-of-fact treatment. His agogic adjustments in 'Le rappel des oiseaux' transform Rameau's birdsong evocations into a stiff and halting conversation; it's a far cry from Frisch's fluid phrasing or the late Scott Ross's airborne fingerwork in a 1986 Saint-Guilhem-le-Désert recital. The recorded ambience is clear and discreetly resonant in this digital-only release, and equally attractive in either 320kbps or lossless download formats. **Jed Distler**

Selected comparisons:

Frisch (ALPHI) *ALPHA134*

Ross (IN4) *IMV088*

Schumann · Janáček

Schumann Davidsbündlertänze, Op 6.
Fantasiestücke, Op 12. *Gesänge der Frühe*,
Op 133 - No 5 **Janáček** *On an Overgrown Path*,
Book 1 - excs
Jonathan Biss *pf*
Wigmore Hall Live  WHLIVE0068 (79' • DDD)
Recorded live, May 22, 2013



In this Wigmore Hall recital, Jonathan Biss sets out to demonstrate how

much influence Schumann had on Janáček. He does so with aplomb, interspersing the Op 12 *Fantasiestücke* with *On an Overgrown Path*. That could have been something that worked better live than on disc; that it isn't is a tribute to the strength of Biss's conviction, and though Janáček's uniquely tangy harmonic language is inimitable, there are more links between the two composers than you might imagine. Marc-André Hamelin had a not dissimilar notion in his pairing of *On an Overgrown Path* with other pieces of Schumann, which was Recording of the Month in June. Though I like Hamelin's approach in much of the more energised music, occasionally I found him too slow in some of the more introspective moments, especially compared with the reactivity of Páleníček and Firkušný.

Biss recalls Schumann's changeability in the opening number of the Janáček cycle and particularly revels in the beauty of 'The Frýdek Madonna', though few can challenge Firkušný in his awestruck sense of loss. Biss conveys the fleeting nature of Schumann's Op 12 to telling effect, though Argerich is more daring still, not least in her glittering 'Traumes Wirren' and in the finely honed rhetoric of the final piece.

He is equally well attuned to *Davidsbündlertänze*, which is by turns

mercurial, witty, touching and commanding. Uchida is a more extreme experience, which won't necessarily be to all tastes. But Biss is very much his own man, revealing often-overlooked textural details and lending plenty of impetuosity to movements such as 'Wild und lustig'. But I also retain a very soft spot for Andreas Haefliger's reading, wonderfully coloured and vividly characterised.

As an encore we get the last of the *Gesänge der Frühe*. If Anderszewski has a greater range of sonority, it is Uchida – even more than Biss – who squeezes the most emotion from Schumann's halting, haunting lines. **Harriet Smith**

Davidsbündlertänze – selected comparisons:

Uchida (12/10) (DECC) 478 2280DH2 or 478 2936DH

Haefliger (SONY) SK48036

Fantasiestücke, Op 12 – selected comparison:

Argerich (1/91) (EMI) 763576-2

Gesänge der Frühe (No 5) – selected comparisons:

Anderszewski (1/11th) (VIRG/ERAT) 642022-2

Uchida (12/13) (DECC) 478 5393DH

Janáček – selected comparisons:

Páleníček (1/75th, 3/92th) (SUPR) SU3812-2

Firkušný (3/91) (RCA) RD60147

Hamelin (6/14) (HYPE) CDA68030



Scriabin

'Extase - Etudes for Piano'
Etudes - Op 2 No 1; Op 8; Op 42; Op 65 Nos 2 & 3
Michèle Gurdal *pf*
Challenge Classics  CC72640 (52' • DDD)



'Scriabin, where does he come from, and who are his followers?' asked Stravinsky, lost in bewilderment and wonder. Others took a different view of such originality, reminding us that there are those who think 'that the air is filled with green monkeys with crimson eyes and sparkling tails, a kind of ecstasy that is sold in Russia at two roubles a bottle'. Such an amusing if misleading comment focuses on Scriabin's later music, where his early full-blooded romanticism changes into a pared-down obsessive use of certain intervals and wheelings round a single idea.

Such worries hardly concern us, however, in Michèle Gurdal's magnificent album, entitled 'Extase' and taking us through the complete Etudes (minus the first study from Op 65). Elsewhere she journeys from the ripely Romantic Etudes of Opp 2 and 8 – from a Chopin-inspired idiom, though one already alive with Scriabin's distinctive Russian tang – through Op 42 and on to the edge of the composer's final obscurity/enlightenment.

Throughout her very taxing programme, Gurdal plays with a romantic fullness and a lack of inhibition that makes you fall in love with Scriabin's early and glittering outpouring. Playing over a wide dynamic range, thundering and caressing with equal conviction, her lavish pedalling allows her an exceptional breadth and colour; and if her *rubato* is fulsome, it is never less than idiomatic. It would be hard to imagine a more committed response to Scriabin's kaleidoscopic changes of mood. This ardent and indeed superb recital is well recorded and comes with an interview in which Gurdal discusses her love of Scriabin. **Bryce Morrison**

Sor

Guitar Sonatas - Op 15b; Op 22; Op 25.

Grand Solo, Op 14

Ricardo Gallén *gtr*

Eudora (F) EUD-SACD1401 (75' • DDD/DSD)



William Carter's two exquisite volumes of a selection of Fernando Sor's equally exquisite

shorter gems have pretty much spoilt me for life and remain the benchmarks against which all subsequent recordings are measured. However, comparing Spanish guitarist Ricardo Gallén's brilliant, incisive performances of four of the five works in which Sor employed sonata form with Carter's inward-looking evocations of the 19th-century salon is doing both players a disservice. Both use copies of 19th-century guitars – Carter a Tony Johnson, Gallén an Arnoldo García after Fabricatore – but where Carter uses the flesh of the fingertips, as did Sor in his day, García uses the nails, as did Sor's famous contemporary Dionisio Aguado. Where Carter favours gut strings, Gallén prefers nylon.

Luckily, both performers do have one work in common, so a useful comparison can be made at least on some level. The work in question is one of Sor's finest: the *Grand Solo*, Op 14. Here, having the advantage of long nails, Gallén unquestionably offers a crisper attack and a brassier orchestral illusion; his dynamic range is also correspondingly larger than Carter's and his interpretation more redolent of the theatre than of the salon. Carter is more suggestive, getting the listener to do the work; the net result is a richer, more subtle listening experience.

Ultimately we are presented with two complementary and equally compelling views of different facets of Sor's art. I for one am glad to have both. **William Yeoman**

Grand Solo – selected comparison:
Carter (5/10) (LINN) CKD343

Stanford

'Organ Works, Vol 2'

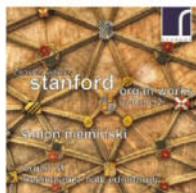
Organ Sonata No 1, Op 149. *The Angelus*, Op 194 No 3. *Idyll and Fantasia*, Op 121. *Marcia eroica*, Op 189 No 2. *Prelude on the Ancient Melody 'Jesu dulcis memoriae'*. Six Preludes, Op 88 - No 1, *Minuet*; No 3, *Toccata*; No 5, *Pastorale*. *Te Deum laudamus (Fantasia)*, Op 116

Simon Niemiński *org*

Resonus (M) RES10130

(resonusclassics.com • 68' • DDD)

Played on the Brindley & Foster organ of Freemasons' Hall, Edinburgh



Like buses that turn up together, so this second volume of Stanford's organ works

comes out at much the same time as Daniel Cook's series on Priory (12/13). This disc, played on the Brindley and Foster organ of the Freemasons' Hall, Edinburgh, follows Tom Winpenny's first volume (10/11) performed on the Binns organ of Queens' College, Cambridge, where Stanford had been organ scholar in the early 1870s. Rather than present each opus number complete, as Priory is doing, Resonus has preferred to issue each recording with a selection of pieces, more in the manner of a mixed programme or recital.

Niemiński's readings are fluent and sympathetic. The 'Marcia eroica', Op 189 No 2, has an infectious momentum and the 'Idyll', Op 121 No 2, a sense of gentle poetry; so, too, the beautiful *Jesu dulcis memoria* has a convincing through-composed arch design, while 'The Angelus', Op 194 No 3 (recorded for the first time here), with its generous use of tremulant, gives us a taste of the early-20th-century town hall. I am less convinced, however, by the three preludes from the Op 88 set, which lack the rhythmic vitality of Cook's interpretation on the Salisbury Cathedral organ, and I crave greater clarity of sound in the First Organ Sonata, which Niemiński otherwise plays with verve and empathy. Still, the programme on this disc is nicely balanced, confirming both the quality and range of Stanford's output for the organ.

Jeremy Dibble

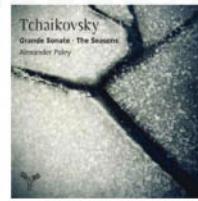
Tchaikovsky

Piano Sonata, 'Grande Sonate', Op 37.

The Seasons, Op 37b

Alexander Paley *pf*

Aparté (M) AP087 (91' • DDD)



Alexander Paley has taken the Russian repertoire to heart. His earlier issue of Balakirev's complete piano works (Brilliant, 5/11) is now followed by a Tchaikovsky recital balancing the opulent G major Sonata with the more intimate *The Seasons*.

In the hands of a great pianist, of Richter, Cherkassky and Beregovsky (alas, not on record), the Sonata's blazing, Schumann-inspired rhetoric and length can more than convince. But it is difficult to feel that Paley's heavily inflected gestures will win new friends for an already much-maligned work. Where is the necessary impetus to drive forwards Tchaikovsky's outsize rhetoric – his voltage and yearning intensity? How you wish Paley would leave well alone and allow the music its own voice instead of bearing down with such a contrived air of significance.

In *The Seasons* too you sense a pianist's intention to give new meaning to music that has for him been too rarely allowed its full expressive range. But, again, even the most fragile utterance is underlined with the weightiest of red pencils, and the playing is leaden and distorted. There is a welcome burst of vivacity in August but in the final all-Russian ballroom scene the pulse is so unsteady that the dancers would surely fall flat.

There is no competition here for Pavel Kolesnikov's recent Hyperion disc of *The Seasons*. Sound on this two-CD set is good rather than outstanding; but altogether you are left to recall the American poet Marianne Moore's lines that 'there is something beyond all this fiddle'.

Bryce Morrison

Seasons – selected comparison:

Kolesnikov (8/14) (HYPERION) CDA68028

Tricoli

Miseri Lares

Valerio Tricoli *kybds/elecs*

PAN (F) PAN44 (80' • DDD)



When he plays live, Valerio Tricoli's beanpole frame is concealed behind a bank of plugged-in hardware: multiple tape machines, loudspeakers and microphones wired through mixing apparatus that allows Tricoli to process, filter and shape sound as it whistles past his ears, all his toil and trouble making the sound bubble. ▶

GRAMOPHONE Collector

HARP FANTASIES

Jeremy Nicholas listens to four discs on which four harpists explore the history and reach of their enigmatic instrument



Harp discoveries: Nicole Müller introduces Jeremy Nicholas to Henriette Renié and Carlos Salzedo

Margret Köll is one of today's foremost historical harp exponents. Her mission on 'L'arpa di Partenope' is to introduce us to early Baroque harp music from Naples. May I suggest that, for those of us unfamiliar with 16th-century Neopolitan harp music (most of us) and the 14 more or less obscure composers featured here, to spread the word effectively she needs to hold our hand a little more firmly. There is scant information on any of the music and, though the 20 tracks are an adroit mix of dance movements, toccatas and more contemplative fare, there is not much that distinguishes one from another. Köll is billed as playing a double harp yet the instrument she plays is a 2007 copy of the Barberini harp, housed in a Rome museum, which is a triple harp. I'm confused.

When you play on the harp a piece that was conceived as a two-hand work for keyboard, you have to persuade the listener that it was originally written for the harp. A large amount of solo harp repertoire draws on such transcriptions. Some are more successful than others. Two that really don't work begin **Nicole Müller's** recital 'Rêves et Danses'. Bach's *French Suite* No 3 in B minor, like the other five, relies on the clear definition of two separate voices dancing round each other, equality of note production

and crisply executed ornaments. It may present an interesting technical challenge for a harpist but without these elements firmly in place it becomes no more than that. Similarly, the harp cannot deliver the rhythmic éclat of a work like Rameau's 'L'Egyptienne' as successfully as the harpsichord. The latter part of Müller's programme consists solely of original works for the harp. Here she is far more convincing, including two delightful works (discoveries for me): *Légende après 'Les Elfes'* by Henriette Renié (1875-1956) based on a poem (helpfully reproduced in the booklet) by Charles Leconte de Lisle, and *Chansons dans la nuit* by Carlos Salzedo (1885-1961).

Another extended (12'36") and colourful work by Renié ends **Sivan Magen's** recital 'Fantasien'. *Ballade fantastique*, written in 1913 and based on Edgar Allan Poe's gothic *The Tell-Tale Heart*, is 'a highly ambitious example of programme music that helped free the harp from the unhelpful trappings of its salon repertory' (Alexander Riley's first-rate booklet). Magen begins with his own arrangement of CPE Bach's *Fantasia* in E flat, Wq58/6. Listening blind you would swear that it was simply a work from the standard harp repertoire that had previously escaped your notice; likewise Magen's arrangements of four Intermezzos by Brahms, who, in common with most major composers, wrote nothing for solo

harp. These make up for the omission. I urge you to hear Magen playing Op 117 Nos 1 and 2 – and Mozart's *Fantasia* in D minor, K397, a work surely indebted to CPE Bach. Harpophiles and bravura-fanciers in general will not fail to fall for the *Fantasia on Tchaikovsky's Eugene Onegin* by the Russian harp virtuoso Ekaterina Walter-Kühne (1870-1930). Magen seems destined to be the Zabaleta *de nos jours*, with a paintbox of colours allied to fabulous dexterity and nuanced phrasing. The recording (Philip Hobbs in The Menuhin Hall) has real presence and depth.

Whereas the CD cover for Nicole Müller's disc pictures her with her harp in a gloomy sylvan glade, **Elizabeth Hainen** has parked hers in a field of lavender or possibly borage – aptly so, for the general mood of the music is pastoral impressionism, butterflies and summer meadows. The exception is the final (and longest) work in the programme, another inspired by Edgar Allan Poe: *Conte fantastique* by André Caplet is based on *The Mask of the Red Death*. This, Hainen tells us, is only its second recording in the original 1908 version for string orchestra (it's usually heard in the 1923 version for string quartet). It's a fascinating work which sounds like the soundtrack to a silent movie or, as Hainen suggests, a Hitchcock thriller. 'Les amis' (the disc's title) is also the first disc to exclusively pair Debussy with that of his devoted friend. Caplet's two *Divertissements* for solo harp, one *à la française*, the other *à l'espagnole*, are well worth investigating. The harpist's own arrangement of Debussy's *Petite Suite* for two pianos will surely be taken up by others. The same composer's Sonata for flute, viola and harp and the *Danse sacrée* and *Danse profane* provide further welcome variety of texture in this beautifully recorded programme. **G**

THE RECORDINGS

Various Cprsrs 'L'arpa di Partenope'

Köll

Accent **ACC24192**



Various Cprsrs 'Rêves et Danses'

Müller

Acoustic Music Records **319 1517-2**



Various Cprsrs 'Fantasien'

Magen

Linn **CKD441**



Caplet, Debussy 'Les amis'

Hainen, Khaner, Diaz; IRIS Orch / Stern

Avie **AV2285**

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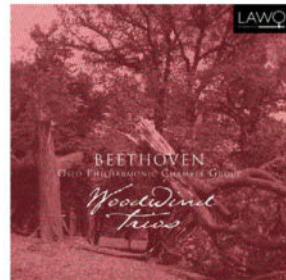
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Miseri Lares ('Wretched House') is Tricoli's most eloquent and fully formed work to date on record, and anyone curious about where seeds sown by *musique concrète* pioneers such as Pierre Henry and Bernard Parmegiani during the early 1950s have left music today will find answers aplenty here. The difference between Tricoli – born in Palermo in 1977 and now living in Berlin – and those studio-bound first-generation composers is that music, for him, has remained a performative activity. Pumping etched-in-stone *musique concrète* through speakers into concert halls is not enough. This composer also improvises; he designs sound installations too; and believes that musical material ought to be transformed by the environment and acoustics into which it is placed.

The environment into which *Miseri Lares* unfolded was a recording studio but this music retains the spontaneity, the mutation of movement through space, familiar from Tricoli's live performances. Issued over two LPs or for download, the piece sprawls over an 80-minute span and you emerge from the experience exhilarated and with your limits challenged. The 18-minute opening section, 'La distanza', with sustained high-pitch hollering resulting in a dramatic point of collapse from which recovery means negotiating your way through a shattered e-scape populated by abrupt outbreaks of jagged, volatile scraping and sonic blasts, sets an ominous tone and dystopian mood.

Tricoli uses structure shrewdly. 'La distanza' is shot from a wide-angle perspective. But the next section, 'Hic labor ille domus et inextricabilis error', pares down to an intimate scale: ricocheting variations of a single tone that crescendos itself out of existence. When silences suddenly start to punctuate during 'In the eye of the cyclone' it's a shock; and as human voices become woven ever deeper into the grain where words fragment into texture, the sense of eavesdropping on a horror that is unspoken intensifies.

Philip Clark

Vierne

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This third volume concludes Hans-Eberhard Ross's magisterial survey of

Vierne's six organ symphonies, recorded in 2013 on his 'home' organ, the glorious Goll four-manual instrument in St Martin's Church, Memmingen, west Bavaria.

Designed with a symphonic tonal palette, it has sufficient aural heft to overwhelm the listener while still containing enough soothing tone-colours for Vierne's more tender moments. This is music that draws one in, written in a deeply chromatic idiom, full of turmoil and despair; demonic at times and certainly sardonic.

Ross has no technical problems with these fearsomely complex scores, rattling through them with aplomb and authority. Another bonus is that he uses the recent edition by Laukvik and Sanger, and – in the case of the Fifth Symphony – reference to the copy marked up by the work's dedicatee, Joseph Bonnet. This, the longest of the six, is the narrative of a hypersensitive man who suffered many personal setbacks.

The Sixth Symphony has a sunnier disposition. The skittish devilment of the *Scherzo* provides a welcome pivot between the serenity of the second-movement *Aria* and the sunken gloom of the *Adagio*, where Vierne pushes his tonal language to its furthest limit. The exuberance of the finale provides a sonic feast. Above all, Ross succeeds in stressing Vierne's contrapuntal mastery with flair while retaining a strong sense of the Romantic architecture of these huge structures. **Malcolm Riley**

Whitlock · Alain · Dupré · Franck

Alain Litanies Dupré Cortège et Litanie, Op 19

No 2 Franck Choral No 3, Op 40

Whitlock Organ Sonata

Greg Morris *pf*

Signum  SIGCD379 (73' • DDD)

Played on the organ of the Temple Church, London



You may think that Percy Whitlock might not have been the most likely composer to produce a successful organ solo work of symphonic proportions. After all, his reputation rests on his colourful organ miniatures, which mingle a neat turn of phrase, derived from his involvement in light music, with piquant harmonies. Greg Morris and the enticing organ of the Temple Church conclusively prove otherwise.

With its self-conscious echoes of Elgar and elusive references to the kind of soured pastoral nostalgia of Delius, there is certainly potential for a harmless game of

spot-the-influence among both performers and listeners to while away the Sonata's 50-minute duration. But Whitlock was driven by a passion for Rachmaninov's Second Symphony; the Sonata, cast in the same key and lasting almost the same time, powerfully evokes not just the emotional extremism but also the structural long-windedness of its Russian exemplar.

The Sonata's identity crisis throws up real problems when it comes to presenting it on disc. It is neither church nor theatre music, and its symphonic language and proportions are not spiced up with the exciting organistic gestures of the French. Whitlock's is music which, for all its derivative elements, has a distinctly personal resonance, and it requires not just a player who can sit outside the emotions and let them speak for themselves but an organ that combines both the gravitas of an English cathedral instrument and the exuberance of a theatre one.

The Temple Church's Harrison and Harrison, originally built for a Scottish baronial ballroom, fits the bill perfectly, its London location adding a wonderfully rich acoustic to a specification which can best be described as hearty. Morris paces the work to perfection, keeping the climaxes at arm's length and holding back tantalisingly where others might be tempted to over-indulge. The motley assortment of French showpieces added as fillers is, at best, incongruous, but does not prevent this being a singularly impressive release.

Marc Rochester

James Rhodes

'5'

JS Bach Partita No 1, BWV825

Beethoven Piano Sonata No 15, 'Pastoral', Op 28

Chopin Ballade No 3, Op 47. Scherzo No 2, Op 31

Gluck/Sgambati Orfeo Melody

Schumann/Liszt Frühlingsnacht, S568

James Rhodes *pf*

Instrumental/Signum  SIGCD371 (70' • DDD)

James Rhodes

'Piano Man'

JS Bach French Suite No 5, BWV816

JS Bach/Busoni Toccata, Adagio and Fugue, BWV564

Beethoven Piano Sonatas - No 21, 'Waldstein', Op 53; No 30, Op 109

Blumenfeld Etude for the left hand, Op 36

Chopin Etude, Op 25 No 12. Prelude, Op 28 No 4. Fantasie, Op 49

Debussy Suite Bergamasque - Clair de lune

Grieg/Ginzburg Peer Gynt - In the Hall of the Mountain King

Moszkowski Etincelles, Op 36 No 6

Rachmaninov Prelude, Op 3 No 2

Ravel Le tombeau de Couperin - Toccata

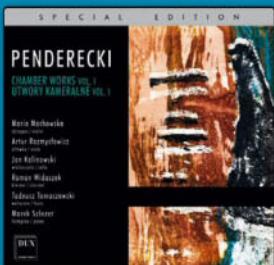
James Rhodes *pf*

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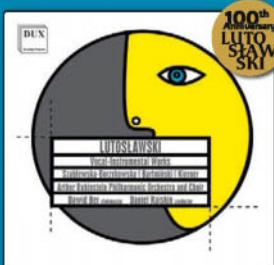
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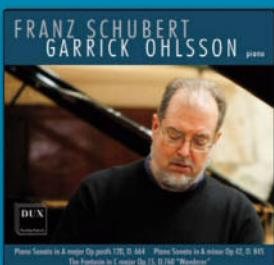
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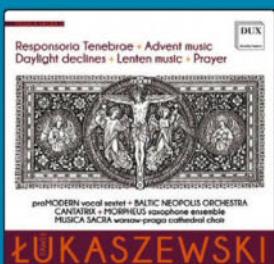
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Gramophone Editor's Choice Recordings

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Gluck	Orfeo ed Euridice (DVD)	Mehta, Luks £23.50
Haydn	Piano Concertos	Bavouzet £11.25
Haydn	Die Jahreszeiten (2CD)	Herreweghe £17.00
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	Canticles from St Paul's Cathedral	Carwood £11.00
#	Dances	Benjamin Grosvenor £11.25
	Semiramide (2CD)	Bonitatus, Ferri £12.50

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Christopher Ball

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Behind pianist James Rhodes's punk-rock persona and harrowing back story lies a sincere, communicative and mindful musician. He always holds your attention, whether or not you agree with each interpretative notion.

Bach's B flat Partita opens the first release on Rhodes's new label with an unusually slow and languid Prelude that functions like a long, austere corridor leading into the relatively peppy Allemande. The Courante is a shade slapdash rhythmically; it concludes with a gentle upwards scale leading into an eloquent, highly rhetorical Sarabande. Like Glenn Gould, Rhodes takes the second Minuet repeats up the octave, and concludes with a brisk yet well-controlled Gigue. The *Allegro* first movement of Beethoven's Op 28 resembles the DG Barenboim recording's *Andante*, but with a little more ebb and flow, while, by contrast, Rhodes's perky second movement trivialises the detached left-hand writing's woodwind-like character. Following a wittily nuanced *Scherzo*, Rhodes's graceful, singing Rondo turns appropriately audacious in the coda.

Rhodes challenges convention by exploring the contrapuntal trajectory in the second section of Chopin's Third Ballade. Unusual voicings draw attention throughout the Second Scherzo, along with a few crowd-whipping accelerations. In contrast to Yuja Wang's fleet and curvaceous Gluck/Sgambati *Melody*, Rhodes indulges in serious and sustained time-stretching, and finishes up with a noble, sensitive account of the Schumann/Liszt 'Frühlingsnacht'.

The DVD offers new performances mostly of pieces familiar from the pianist's earlier CDs, prefaced by casual yet vividly informative introductions. These touch upon the music in disarming detail, supplemented by Rhodes's frank autobiographical reflections. We see Rhodes rehearsing at home, putting in the kitchen, lighting up his umpteenth cigarette of the day and riding a Bakerloo line tube train. He leans into the piano as if he's excavating under the notes, moving his arms in a way that suggests both high drama and the utmost in physical economy. Rhodes also enjoys talking about having to master difficult passages, such as the opening phrase of the Bach/Busoni

C major Toccata. Rhodes's fusion of instinct, mindfulness and individuality would make his talent stand out in any era.

Jed Distler

'Motherland'

JS Bach Cantata No 208 - Sheep may safely graze **Brahms** Intermezzo, Op 117 No 2 **Chopin** Etude, Op 25 No 7 **Debussy** Suite Bergamasque - Clair de lune **Dvořák** Slavonic Dance No 10, Op 72 No 2^a **Grieg** Homesickness, Op 57 No 6 **Handel** Minuet, HWV434 No 4 (arr Kempff) **Kancheli** When Almonds Blossomed **Ligeti** Musica ricercata No 7 **Liszt** Wiegenlied, S198 **Mendelssohn** Song Without Words, Op 67 No 2 **Pärt** Für Alina **Ravel** Pavane pour une infante défunte **D Scarlatti** Keyboard Sonata, K380 **Scriabin** Etude, Op 2 No 1 **Tchaikovsky** The Seasons, Op 37b - October ('Autumn Song') **Traditional** Vaguiorko ma (Don't you love me?) (arr Buniatishvili) **Khatia Buniatishvili, ^aGvantsa Buniatishvili** pfs Sony Classical ® 88883 73462-2 (66' • DDD)



At her London recital in June, Khatia Buniatishvili played a second half of virtuoso works (Chopin, Ravel, Stravinsky) that bordered on the incoherent, so frantic were her tempi and shapeless her phrasing. Then, for her first encore, she played Wilhelm Kempff's arrangement of a Handel Minuet (it's on this new disc). It was one of the loveliest things I've ever heard in a piano recital. How could someone play this simple little piece so exquisitely and yet misjudge (most of) the rest of the programme so completely? One was left wishing this gifted pianist would calm down and rethink the use to which she puts her phenomenal digital prowess.

Someone must have been listening, because Buniatishvili's latest disc is the very antithesis of the recital, rather too much so as it transpires: a programme almost entirely in the same vein as the Handel-Kempff, that's to say soothing, intimate and reflective. Buniatishvili produces the most ravishing, velvet-toned *pianissimo*, beautifully captured in Berlin's Jesus-Christus-Kirche. The trouble is that, after 20 minutes or so of ravishing, velvet-toned *pianissimo*, one begins to wonder if that is all this pianist is going to reveal of herself in these 17 short works. Variety comes in the form of a Mendelssohn *Song Without Words* (enchanting), Ligeti's *Musica ricercata* No 7, its left-hand ostinato passagework dispatched with fabulous hushed fluency, and the *Slavonic Dance* Op 72 No 2, in which Buniatishvili is

joined by her sister Gvantsa. Too often, though, the introspection seems manufactured from without rather than within (the Brahms Intermezzo and Ravel's *Pavane*), while Arvo Pärt's concluding *Für Alina* must hold some sort of record for the least number of notes in a piece lasting over five minutes. The CD's booklet, prefaced by the pianist's gnomic musings, is discursive to a degree. **Jeremy Nicholas**

'The Transcendentalist'

Cage Dream. In a Landscape **Feldman** Palais de Mari **Scriabin** Guirlande, Op 73 No 1. Poème languide, Op 52 No 3. Preludes - Op 11 No 21; Op 15 No 4; Op 16 No 1; Op 31 No 1; Op 39 No 3. Rêverie, Op 49 No 3 **Wolfschleger** Music Without Metaphor **Ivan Ilić** pf Heresy ® HERESY015 (64' • DDD)



At a time when virtually everything is available on CD, many pianists search for something both different and enlightening. For the Serbian-American pianist Ivan Ilić, who calls his disc 'The Transcendentalist', it is a question of terms, one long associated with Liszt's *Etudes d'exécution transcendantes*, to a going beyond the range of understood virtuosity, an expansion into music of a seemingly unplayable, quasi-symphonic scope and scale. Ilić turns the term on its head, seeing how Scriabin led in his later works to a form of pared-down minimalist expression.

With great skill he surely answers the latter part of Stravinsky's bewildered question about the older Russian composer (see page 79). For Ilić there are unmistakable lines of continuity rather than division. Arguably the roots of the future began with Liszt, whose experimental, dark-hued final utterances dealing with obsessive patterning, harmonic ambiguity and unresolved endings must surely have influenced Scriabin beyond Chopin, the key influence of his early years. Ilić makes his case with unfaltering poise; and if you feel that his offerings of works by John Cage, Scott Wollschleger and Morton Feldman hardly reach a sense of the transcendental in the same sense as, say, Fauré's late song-cycle *L'horizon chimérique* (literally 'the mystical, transcendental beyond'), his theory, one that remembers the endless repetitions of Satie's *Vexations*, finally leads to silence, the negation of sound itself. Ilić is well recorded and will prompt even the most enterprising musicians to think again. **Bryce Morrison**

Augusta Read Thomas

This composer's career may have been spent in teaching but her music is hardly staid and academic, argues Richard Whitehouse

American classical music this past quarter-century has been dominated by the minimalist aesthetic that came to the fore as a reaction against the modernist thinking which had previously held sway. Currently it represents a virtual lingua franca in terms of its influence on mainstream composers. Others, however, have looked back (not in anger and still less out of nostalgia) to an era in which aspects of modernism were linked to a freely evolving tonality so that new possibilities were opened up for exploration. Only recently has this approach regained prominence, with Augusta Read Thomas being among its leading exponents.

Born in Glen Cove, Long Island, in April 1964, Thomas studied at Yale University and later at the Royal Academy of Music in London and Chicago's Northwestern University. To speak of influences is often unnecessarily subjective, yet two composers with whom she came into contact during this period were to leave their mark on her music in the most direct and positive sense. From Jacob Druckman (1928-96) she absorbed the value of instrumental colour as a formal and

'She's stayed true to the principles evident in her earliest works – enhancing a sense of an integrated and self-sustaining unity'

expressive component rather than just an external dressing, while in Donald Erb (1927-2008) she had the example of an orchestrator who was second to none in this respect among American composers of his generation. What this gave to Thomas's music from the outset was its clarity of conception and precision of gesture (whether in the briefest of instrumental miniatures or in large-scale orchestral works), which act as the focus for her often intricate textures and iridescent harmonies – thereby ensuring that her work exudes an immediacy and a communicativeness whatever its degree of complexity and dissonance.

This leads on to the criticism – disguised as observation – that her music is academic or staid as to its intrinsic qualities. Such an epithet has often been applied to composers whose careers have been spent in teaching (thereby supposing that writing for films or commercial concerns were guarantees of artistic freedom or integrity), and while Thomas has long been committed to education (having taught at the Eastman School of Music and Northwestern University and more recently having been appointed University Professor of Composition at the University of Chicago), this hardly equates with her freedom of musical thinking with its



Radical thinker: Thomas reassesses traditional formal models in her compositions

avoidance, or at least its radical reassessment, of traditional formal models and its embracing of elements derived from jazz and improvisation. In her own words, 'Although my music is highly notated...I like [it] to have the feeling that it is organically being self-propelled...As if we listeners are...overhearing a *captured improvisation*.'

Another reason why Thomas's music has been easy to underrate is its sheer consistency. There are few minor or peripheral works in her now sizeable catalogue, while the achievement of her major pieces is seldom outstripped by their ambition. Whereas others of her contemporaries, moreover, have tended either to fulfil their high-profile commissions with a uniformity that borders on dullness, or to attempt changes in stylistic direction with an obviousness that borders on the superficial, Thomas has stayed true to those principles evident in her earliest acknowledged works – so making the trajectory of her output one of incremental and subtle evolution, which in turn enhances its sense of being an integrated and self-sustaining unity.

Thomas's recorded profile used not to be a little curious in that although numerous of her works had been made available commercially, a majority of these tended to appear as part of multicomposer discs or miscellanies – and this made acquiring her music a lengthy as well as an expensive process. The composer seems to have recognised this, having subsequently issued five discs under her own auspices (which enjoyed only a limited circulation) and then, more recently, having come to an arrangement with Nimbus that has so far seen the release of three discs which, when taken together, afford a representative overview of her output.



The first of these focuses on her music for orchestra, the second on chamber and piano works, while the third is a portrait drawn in large part from a concert to mark her 50th birthday and presented by the New Haven Symphony Orchestra – with whom Thomas was Composer-in-Residence. One piece from each of the discs has been selected here to illustrate the range and diversity of her output, besides all being significant and worthwhile compositions in their own right.

Words of the Sea (1995–96) is a symphonic suite that recalls more progressive aspects of post-war American music in its purposeful and virtuosic trajectory towards a luminous apotheosis. Assuredly an orchestral showpiece with substance, it gets an account of unstinting panache by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (with whom Thomas was Composer-in-Residence from 1997 to 2006) directed by Pierre Boulez, who has been a consistent advocate of Thomas's music during recent years. *Starlight Ribbons* (2013) is her most extended piece for solo piano, and one amounting to what might be termed a 'rhapsody' in which a wealth of allusions (though never quotations, as such) to other composers have been integrated by dint of

THOMAS FACTS

Born April 24, 1964, in Glen Cove, NY
1983-87 Studies with Alan Stout at Northwestern University
1986-89 Studies with Oliver Knussen at Tanglewood
1988 Completes studies with Jacob Druckman at Yale University
1989 Postgraduate studies with Paul Patterson at the Royal Academy of Music
1993-2001 Assistant then Associate Professor at Eastman School of Music
1997-2006 Mead Composer-in-Residence with Chicago SO
September 8, 2001 UK premiere of *Aurora* by Daniel Barenboim and Chicago SO at the BBC Proms
2001-06 Appointed Wyatt Professor of Music at Northwestern University
December 14, 2008 World premiere of *Helios Choros II* by Daniel Harding and London SO at Barbican Hall
May 2009 Inducted into American Academy of Arts and Letters
September 9, 2009 UK Premiere of *Third Violin Concerto* by Frank Peter Zimmermann and BBC SO / Bělohlávek at the Proms
2009-11 MUSICALIVE Composer-in-Residence with New Haven SO
2009 Artistic Director of Contemporary Music Festival, Tanglewood
2011-present Professor of Composition at University of Chicago
May 31, 2014 UK Premiere of *Resounding Earth* by Third Coast Percussion at St Leonard's Church, Shoreditch, London

her resourceful and idiomatic writing for this instrument – not least as realised here by Daniel Schlosberg. Finally, the song-cycle *Absolute Ocean* (2008) has recourse to ee cummings (a poet with whom Thomas has a deep affinity), setting three of his poems for soprano and an orchestra in which the obbligato role for harp comes to the fore during a sensuous interlude – for the Debussian line-up of flute, harp, violin and viola – prior to the final song, 'open your heart', whose mingling of poignancy and ecstasy ranks among the most affecting vocal works of recent years. Any of these pieces would make an ideal point of entry into Thomas's music.

From among the major works that still await recording, perhaps the most important is *Helios choros* (*Sun God Dancers*), a triptych for orchestra which was written during 2006-7 and is also envisioned as a ballet. London audiences had the chance to hear some of this when the central part was performed at the Barbican by the London Symphony Orchestra (who co-commissioned it) with Daniel Harding in December 2008. Taking as its starting point the legend of the sun god and his chariot-rides across the sky as evoked by the 'chorus' in ancient Greek drama, its sophisticated use of sizeable forces makes it a 'concerto for orchestra' in all but name, while the formal follow-through has a cohesion that might reasonably be called symphonic. The energetic opening section makes use of motifs which are resourcefully deployed in the slower music that ensues, followed by a 'scherzo' of heady velocity, then an 'intermezzo' of teasing reticence, before being capped by a final section whose culmination in propulsive rhythmic unisons makes for a decisive rounding-off and also a powerful transition to what follows.

Helios choros is a real achievement, then, in representing a distinctive present-day figure at something like full stretch. With any luck the work will find its way to commercial release, underlining Thomas's creativity as she embarks on her sixth decade – and with her reputation surely destined to make her one of the leading composers in the first half of the 21st century. ☀

RECOMMENDED RECORDINGS

Three ideal points of entry into Thomas's music



Selected works for orchestra (incl Words of the Sea)

Various artists Nimbus Alliance ④ NI6258 (4/14)

The six pieces here make for a viable perspective on Thomas's music across almost two decades. With artists such as Pierre Boulez and Oliver Knussen taking charge, the excellence of the performances is assured.



'Chamber & Piano Works' (incl Starlight Ribbons)

Various artists Nimbus Alliance ④ NI6261 (8/14)

This disc of chamber and piano works reaffirms the consistency as well as the versatility of Thomas's idiom. The performances are again unfailingly responsive to her finely wrought and bracingly immediate language.



'A Portrait of Augusta Read Thomas' (incl Absolute Ocean)

Various artists Nimbus Alliance ④ NI6262

This latest Nimbus release presents a well-rounded 'portrait' of Thomas. Six of the works included here were given at a 50th-birthday concert by the New Haven Symphony Orchestra, in itself a conspectus of her wide-ranging output from the past decade.

Vocal



David Vickers reviews a soprano's discovery of Giovanni Ferrandini: *'Invernizzi's rare genius for making listeners hang rapturously on every word and gesture is fully to the fore'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 89**



Guy Rickards on a forgotten Swedish-Jewish choral work: *'An oratorio in the grand manner, urgently communicative even in the passages where development marks time'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 92**

Beethoven

Missa solemnis, Op 123

Helen Donath sop Doris Soffel mez

Siegfried Jerusalem ten Hans Sotin bass

Edinburgh Festival Chorus; London

Philharmonic Orchestra / Sir Georg Solti

LPO (M) LPO0077 (80' • ADD • T/T)

Recorded live at the Royal Albert Hall, London, September 10, 1982



Where Beethoven's *Missa solemnis* is concerned, only the big beasts of the

musical jungle need apply. Georg Solti was one such beast. His command, both of the work and of the forces he has at his disposal here, makes for a vivid account of the Mass. The Edinburgh Festival Chorus, the creation of the legendary Arthur Oldham and his successor John Currie, is in particularly fine fettle. For so large a chorus, the word-pointing is superb. As for the soloists, you need only read their names to recognise the quality of the line-up. The contributions of the young Siegfried Jerusalem are particularly noteworthy.

I wish I could be more sanguine about the disc's technical quality. Solti's vital yet never hectic tempi mean that the performance can be shoehorned – just – on to a single CD. The lack of space between movements might be rectified by judicious use of the pause control. What can't be rectified, in what is otherwise a perfectly serviceable live analogue recording, is the sense of many of the big choral *tutti*s being recorded at levels which come perilously close to causing the sound to blur round the edges. If you already own Solti's 1977 Chicago studio recording (Decca, 8/78 – nla), you can rest content. **Richard Osborne**

Berlioz

La captive, Op 12. *Herminie*.

La mort de Cléopâtre

Lisa Larsson sop

Het Gelders Orkest / Antonello Manacorda

Challenge Classics (M) CC72639 (48' • DDD)



The trend towards casting Berlioz with lighter voices, often with singers more seasoned in chronologically earlier repertoire, takes a fruitful if limited turn as Baroque-repertoire soprano Lisa Larsson steps into music associated with Dame Janet Baker and Jessye Norman. Next to them, Larsson's personality and strength of conception stand up to any comparison as long as listeners can shift some fundamental ideas about the sound and nature of these characters.

Far from the wounded goddess that would eventually lead to Dido in *Les Troyens*, Larsson's characterisations of these early-period works have a more fragile humanity, with pockets of psychological detail missed by others, often conveyed with a confiding intimacy that might only be possible in the recording studio. Even the studio setting, though, doesn't protect her from being covered by the orchestra, particularly in sections of *La mort de Cléopâtre* that lie in the weaker, lower areas of her voice. In moments when her voice starts to show its mileage, the two different voices used for *Herminie* and *Cléopâtre* (Michèle Lagrange and Béatrice Urias-Monzon) on the Naxos disc 'Berlioz Cantatas' seem preferable.

Then the Larsson disc re-insinuates itself. Of all the spacious SACD productions that have come out of Challenge Classics, none I've heard is this luminous. Antonello Manacorda never overshadows Larsson heedlessly, but with interpretative purpose. His orchestra may not be ready to record *Symphonie fantastique* but his advocacy of these works makes them sound like major Berlioz (as opposed to dry runs for later, better works). In fact, his treatment of the *Cléopâtre* orchestral writing makes the piece sound downright dangerous. Another drawing card is *La captive*, Berlioz's Op 12 song from which the disc takes its title, with Larsson making

the somewhat discursive Victor Hugo verse sound more cogent, with special sensitivity to the nocturnal imagery. Flaws and all, this is a fine addition to the Berlioz discography. **David Patrick Stearns**

Herminie, Cléopâtre – selected comparisons:

Lagrange, Urias-Monzon, Lille Nat Orch, J-C Cadesus

(9/03) (NAXO) 8 555810

Bjørnstad

Sunrise

Kari Bremnes voc **Matias Bjørnstad** alto sax

Aage Kvalbein vc **Bjørn Kjellemyr** db **Ketil Bjørnstad** pf **Hans-Kristian Kjos Sørensen** perc

Oslo Chamber Choir / Egil Fossum

ECM (M) 374 5479 (79' • DDD)



At a time when both Freudian psychoanalysis and the Expressionist art movement were still in their infancy, artist Edvard Munch was already exploring disturbing fragile thoughts and extreme mental states in paintings such as *The Scream* (1893). Less well known is that Munch was also a writer who produced a number of short stories and other prose pieces. It is the painter's words that form the basis for *Sunrise*, described as a 'cantata' for choir, solo voice and ensemble by fellow Norwegian pianist and composer Ketil Bjørnstad.

Bjørnstad has also produced a number of books over the years, including one about Munch, but this is probably where the comparison ends. Munch's prose often shows him wrestling with existential angst, reflecting a fragile state of mind that often teeters 'on the edge of the abyss'. Despite moments of lyrical introspection, Bjørnstad's music, on the other hand, possesses an insouciant spirit and freedom that comes from extensive experience of performing and recording jazz.

Sunrise depicts Munch's dark struggle with and against the forces of life, eventually finding resolution in the image of the sunrise. Like his paintings, Munch's

imagery is often powerful and visceral. Bjørnstad, however, steers clear of providing a musical analogue to Munch's texts. His style is rooted in jazz-style modal and harmonic inflections, reminiscent at times of ECM stablemates Keith Jarrett, Pat Metheny and Lyle Mays.

At times the words and music provide a strange union. This is illustrated most clearly in a series of short wordless recitatives and intermezzos that intersperse the text settings at various points. Frenetic free-form jazz punctuates two of the three recitatives – the most obvious representations on the disc of Munch's decline into insanity. The function of the intermezzos is less clear, however, but maybe these juxtapositions are precisely the point.

Bjørnstad's style is expressive rather than expressionist; lyrical, reflective, sometimes beautifully so, such as in the songs that feature vocalist Kari Bremnes ('The Mother' and 'Open Window'). There are also some very telling contributions from cellist Aage Kvalbein and dynamic double bassist Bjørn Kjellemyr, as well as the composer himself on piano. The Oslo Chamber Choir sing with an intelligence and understanding for both the words and the music, especially on 'As if they were in church'. But it's when Bjørnstad deliberately limits the expressive envelope (such as in the persistent two-chord pattern used in 'Open Window') that he gets closest to evoking Munch's elliptical and often unsettling poetic style. **Pwyll ap Siôn**

Brahms

Ein deutsches Requiem, Op 45

Sally Matthews sop **Christopher Maltman** bar
London Symphony Chorus and Orchestra / Valery Gergiev

LSO Live (M) LSO0748 (64' • DDD • T/t)

Recorded live at the Barbican, London,

March 30 & 31, 2013



This hybrid SACD was recorded at the Barbican in March 2013 as part of the LSO's Brahms/Szymanowski festival. Although there are several splendid top choices for a *German Requiem* recording, this latest offering won't, alas, be joining them.

At the outset, however, all appears well; the veiled opening unfolds with a hushed, organic pulse. Choral entries are cleanly marked and draw out the text's emphases with an assured certainty. This continues into the extremely slow 'march in triple

time' second movement. Matters start to come adrift in the third movement, which lacks a sense of forward propulsion: one senses that the immaculately drilled chorus is straining at the leash. Occasionally it takes a bar or two for choir and orchestra to synchronise until the magnificent fugue stretches out over a pedal D.

The greatest error of judgement occurs in 'Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen', with a sudden and unnecessary *accelerando* which robs the second horn of its little moment of solo glory in bar 89. It's all too perfunctory and hurried. The sixth movement also starts at quite a trot (hardly *Andante*) and Gergiev proceeds to slash his way through the music from the *Vivace* onwards, forcing many small details of rhythm and diction to be obliterated. Of the soloists, Christopher Maltman is firm and forthright in his two solo passages, while Sally Matthews's unrelenting vibrato becomes wearying.

Gergiev's wayward approach to tempi and lack of nobility rule out this newcomer. Better to chose Gardiner's live recording for a more balanced approach, with a smaller, tauter chorus and a brighter-sounding orchestra. **Malcolm Riley**

Selected comparison:

ORR, Gardiner (5/12) (SDG) SDG706

Delbos • Messiaen

'Pour Mi'

Delbos L'âme en bourgeon

Messiaen Poèmes pour Mi. Trois Mélodies

Liv Elise Nordskog sop **Signe Bakke** pf

LAWO Classics (F) LWC1051 (52' • DDD/DSD • T)



Messiaen's song-cycle *Poèmes pour Mi* and his first wife Claire Delbos's *L'âme en bourgeon* were premiered in the same Paris concert in 1937. Reuniting these works on disc for the first time is the fascinating premise for this recording by the Norwegian soprano Liv Elise Nordskog and pianist Signe Bakke.

The connections between the cycles go further: Delbos sets a collection of poems by Cécile Sauvage – Messiaen's mother – written while she was pregnant with her son. Delbos's setting was composed while she herself was pregnant with her own child, at the same time as Messiaen was writing the song-cycle inspired by his wife and given her own pet-name of 'Mi'.

Biographically this makes for beautiful programming but musically it's also a fascinating pairing. The textural drama of Messiaen's cycle – by turns wilfully ugly

('Epouvante') and delicately inscrutable ('Ta voix') give way to the melodic unfolding of Delbos's songs – sustained and lyrical, even in their moments of extremity.

Debilitating mental illness cut short Delbos's career as a composer and *L'âme en bourgeon* represents a major work in a very small oeuvre. The musical voice here, however, is already distinctive – harmonically freer than Messiaen's but sharing a recognisably similar aesthetic.

Technically the Messiaen is far more challenging, demanding extremes of range and vocal colour from the singer and significant virtuosity from the pianist. Both Nordskog and Bakke give refined, idiomatic performances, finding the intimacy if not always the emotional excess of these songs. Just occasionally though, Nordskog betrays the difficulty of what she is doing, hesitating on the edge of the music's precipices and holding back in tone colour or muscular conviction.

A booklet essay (translated into English) offers a close reading of these rarely heard works, though non-Norwegian speakers should note that the poems only appear in French and Norwegian. **Alexandra Coglian**

Ferrandini



'Al Santo Sepolcro'

Il pianto di Maria Vergine.

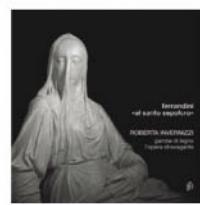
O spettacolo pur troppo funesto

Roberta Invernizzi sop

L'Opera Stravagante; Gambe di Legno

Fra Bernardo (F) FB1401231 (55' • DDD)

Recorded live



The Venetian composer Giovanni Battista Ferrandini (1709-91) worked in Munich and then retired to Padua – where he met the young Mozart in 1771. In fact, there are some tangential connections between the two composers: Mozart's *La finta giardiniera* and *Idomeneo* were both composed for Munich's Residenz court theatre, which was inaugurated in 1753 with Ferrandini's *Catone in Utica*. His

Il pianto di Maria Vergine was formerly thought (wrongly) to be composed by Handel 30-odd years earlier, and dissimilar recordings by Anne Sofie von Otter with Musica Antiqua Köln (Archiv, 7/94), Agnès Mellon with Arion (earlymusic.com), Bernarda Fink with Il Giardino Armonico (L'Oiseau-Lyre, 9/09) and Maria Keohane with the European Union Baroque Orchestra (ERP, 4/14) confirm that Ferrandini's sepulchral cantata is a poignant miniature masterpiece.

Roberta Invernizzi's rare genius for making listeners hang rapturously on every word and musical gesture is fully to the fore in this live Austrian radio recording. More than any of the aforementioned versions, she strikes the perfect balance between spiritual sincerity and dramatic narration. The solemnly beautiful string parts in the arias are impeccably shaded by L'Opera Stravagante, and some of the instrumentalists reconfigure as the viol consort Gambe di Legno in *O spettacolo pur troppo funesto*. This contemplation of the crucified Christ's promise of salvation in Paradise to the good thief features archaic scoring for viols and *concertante* archlute, and these are spellbinding in the long slow aria 'Del Vostro Dio mirate'. This is apparently a limited edition – so snap up these intelligently refined performances while you can. **David Vickers**

Handel

Jephtha, HWV70

Sophie Bevan, Grace Davidson sop

Susan Bickley mez **Robin Blaze** counterten

James Gilchrist ten **Matthew Brook** bass

The Sixteen / Harry Christophers

Coro F ③ COR16121 (176' • DDD)



Jephtha (1752) dramatises the folly, pride and penitence of the Hebrew general

who rashly vows to Jehovah that if his army is blessed with victory against the Ammonites he will sacrifice the first thing he sees upon returning home; it turns out to be his only daughter Iphis, and so the beleaguered Jephtha finds himself in conflict with everyone else around him (and also with his own conscience) while he confronts what seems like unavoidable tragedy. James Gilchrist conveys affable nonchalance in the early stages (graceful melismatic singing in 'Virtue my soul shall still embrace'), and aptly characterises Jephtha's deepening emotional responses to the unfolding tragedy, such as hopeless despair in the extraordinary accompanied recitative 'Deeper and deeper still, thy goodness, child, pierceth a father's bleeding heart'; his sublime *sotto voce* singing in the *da capo* repeat of 'Waft her, angels, to the skies' tenderly conveys Jephtha's heartbroken preparations for the sacrifice of Iphis, although overly prominent plucking from theorbo and harp (which has no place in this oratorio), soporific organ continuo and an over-deliberate slowing of the tempo all distracted my ears from Gilchrist's supremely accomplished

singing. Sophie Bevan's Iphis is endearingly naive in 'Tune the soft melodious lute' (the theorbo and anachronistic harp briefly won me over), whereas her modest resignation to a tragic doom is profoundly moving ('Farewell, ye limpid springs and brooks'). Storgè's 'In gentle murmurs will I mourn' is sung with delectable softness by Susan Bickley, who later seems a tad underpowered when having to deliver extreme agitated emotions of inexplicable anxiety ('Scenes of horror') and then turbulent anger at her husband's foolishness ('Let other creatures die'). Robin Blaze performs Hamor's 'Dull delay, in piercing anguish' with subtle finesse and sensitivity for words. An appendix presents Matthew Brook singing Zebul's 1753 addition 'Freedom now once more possessing'; it is a pity that the appendix does not also include Iphis's last aria, which almost always gets dropped in favour of the quintet by JC Smith that replaced it in the 1756 revival.

The orchestra play excellently, although just two cellos and one double bass struggle to fully realise the expressive sonorities, rhetorical momentum and muscular vigour needed for bass-driven moments such as the dance-like climax to the first chorus 'No more to Ammon's god and king'. The Sixteen sing with their customary neatness, sweetness or agility. The choir do not sound excited enough at the miraculous interventions of warrior angels in battle ('Cherub and seraphim, unbodied forms'), but the chorus of virgins welcoming Jephtha home ('Welcome thou, whose deeds conspire') is so prettily done that it makes the warrior's baleful reaction all the more disturbing. 'How dark, O Lord, are thy decrees', from its broodily mysterious opening to its stoical conclusion 'whatever is, is right' (a quotation from Alexander Pope's *Essay on Man*), is given the most satisfactorily nuanced choral performance I have heard.

David Vickers

Haydn

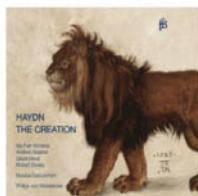
The Creation (sung in English)

Ida Falk Winland sop **Andrew Staples** ten

Robert Davies bar **David Stout** bass-bar

Musica Saeculorum / Philipp von Steinaecker

Fra Bernardo M ② FB1301272 (102' • DDD)



For obvious commercial reasons, recordings of *The Creation* in English

are still rare. Which makes it slightly surprising that this new version derives

from a performance in the South Tyrol, directed by the young German cellist-conductor Philipp von Steinaecker. Once you have adjusted to the vast, cavernous acoustic of Brixen (Bressanone) Cathedral, there is much to enjoy here. From the opening evocation of the primeval void, Steinaecker has a keen ear for Haydn's miraculously inventive orchestration and secures lively, stylistically assured playing from his cosmopolitan period band. One or two of his tempi – say, in 'With verdure clad' or the trio and chorus 'The Lord is great' – struck me as over-impetuous. The all-English chorus – just 22 singers but sounding much larger – is lithe and youthfully fresh of tone, topped by a gleaming soprano line. Tenors and basses are incisive without ever bawling (the tenors' leap to a top A near the climax of 'The Heavens are telling' rings out thrillingly); and while the swimmy acoustic compromises perfect contrapuntal clarity, the singers clearly articulate Baron van Swieten's quaint, Milton-inspired text, touched up at some of its more nonsensical moments.

Steinaecker's soloists are all good without quite equalling those on Paul McCreesh's Gramophone Award-winning Archiv performance. David Stout, the Raphael, fields a resonant bass-baritone (strong low notes) but could do with more subtlety and grace in, say, the dulcet close of 'Rolling in foaming billows', where his soft tones lack warmth. Tenor Andrew Staples, too, is happier in robust than lyric mode. Mark Padmore, for McCreesh, distils a greater sense of wonder and mystery at the first moonrise, and more tenderness at the creation of the first woman.

Swedish soprano Ida Falk Winland sounds slightly pressed by Steinaecker's brisk (and unyielding) tempo in 'With verdure clad' but phrases and colours delectably in her avian aria. She survives into Part 3 as a sweet-toned Eve, where Stout is replaced by the mellow baritone of Robert Davies (Haydn never used more than three soloists in *The Creation*). The long Adam-and-Eve love duet is a delight, lyrically intimate at the opening, eager and impulsive in the *Allegro*, frolicking, chortling woodwind to the fore. I'm glad to have heard this new recording, above all for some magnificent choral singing. But if you want Haydn's prelapsarian vision in English, McCreesh's inspiring performance is still the one to go for.

Richard Wigmore

Selected comparisons:

Gabrieli Consort, McCreesh (3/08) (ARCH) 477 7361AH2



Philippe Herreweghe and his forces unlock the inventive power of Haydn's *The Seasons* with a vivid, joyous performance on the conductor's own label

Haydn

Die Jahreszeiten, HobXXI/3

Christina Landshamer sop Maximilian Schmitt ten
Florian Boesch bass Collegium Vocale Gent;

Champs-Elysées Orchestra / Philippe Herreweghe
PHI (M) ② LPH013 (129' • DDD • T/t)



Haydn's glorious celebration of the rural world in which he, a wheelwright's son, grew up has done notably well on disc, with bracing period-instrument recordings from Gardiner (Archiv), Harnoncourt and Jacobs (both Harmonia Mundi), and Colin Davis's lovingly observed, large-scale performance on the LSO Live label. On his own label, Philippe Herreweghe here directs a performance of comparable vividness, one to reinforce my long-held feeling that *The Seasons* is every bit a match for *The Creation* in inventive power. While less bucolically uninhibited than Jacobs, especially, Herreweghe has a sharp ear for the score's manifold colours, and never misses a trick with Haydn's delectable tone-painting: say, in the flitting, gambolling woodwind in Spring's 'Freudenlied', the charming wind



sallies in the Autumn trio and chorus 'So lohnet die Natur den Fleiss', or the hushed, bleak introduction to Winter. Each of the woodwind principals emerges as a poet in their own right.

Christina Landshamer, pure and luminous of tone, sings this with an ideal mix of grace and wondering innocence. She is delightful, too, in the song where artful country girl outwits aristocratic lecher, and in her Autumn love duet with the dulcet-voiced young tenor Maximilian Schmitt. His sensitive singing of the cavatina depicting the summer heat (the hushed, muted strings marvellously evocative here) is one of the performance's highlights. Florian Boesch makes a genially relaxed Simon, singing the ploughman's song and shooting aria with unforced relish (though he sounds unhappy in his brief bouts of coloratura). In Winter, Boesch brings a subtle feeling for colour and word-pointing to Haydn's picture of the frozen wastes.

True to form, Herreweghe takes immense care over internal balancing, both of orchestra and chorus. If the Collegium Vocale's timbre is slightly more soft-grained than their rivals', they throw themselves with spirit into the marvellously varied music that Haydn provides for them. The opening chorus of Spring, with its musette drones,

has a gentle, graceful lilt (Jacobs and Gardiner are brisker and earthier here). Perhaps Herreweghe is a shade sober in the Ländler-ish evening chorus in Summer and the noble fugue in praise of hard work ('O Fleiss, o edler Fleiss'). But the autumn wine harvest goes with a lusty – and increasingly tipsy – swing, while Herreweghe yields to no one in the cataclysmic summer tempest, the hunting chorus (gloriously raw, raucous natural horns) and the exultant closing fugue. While Jacobs remains, by a whisker, my first choice, Herreweghe and his forces do eloquent justice to the poetry, grandeur and, crucially, the sheer joy of this least solemn, most life-affirming of oratorios.

Richard Wigmore

Selected comparison:

Jacobs (A/04th) (HARM) HMC97 1829/30

Palestrina

'Volume 5'

Missa Iam Christus astra ascenderat. Dum completerentur. Loquebantur variis linguis. Veni Creator Spiritus. Iam Christus astra ascenderat. Veni Sancte Spiritus. Song of Songs - No 13, Laeva eius sub capite meo; No 14 Vox dilecti mei; No 15 Surge, propera, amica mea. Magnificat quarti toni

The Sixteen / Harry Christophers

Coro (F) COR16124 (64' • DDD • T/t)



The Sixteen's Palestrina series marches on, following a formula now firmly established in earlier instalments: a Mass, a hymn, a *Magnificat* and three madrigals from the 1584 publication setting the Song of Songs. The moods here are nicely contrasted: the opening *Dum complerentur* must be one of the composer's most splendid motets, and the four-voice Mass *Iam Christus astra ascenderat* is a more inward-looking but by no means subdued work. The similarity of the plainchant on which it's based with the famous *Virgo prudentissima* means that those who know the latter will nearly always feel on familiar ground.

As far as I'm aware, this is the first recording of this work and also the first four-voice Mass to feature in The Sixteen's series, making good on Harry Christophers's seeming commitment to present a fully rounded view of the composer. As so often, Palestrina expands the scoring in the final *Agnus* by adding an extra voice, and the gain in elaborateness is particularly satisfying. Another familiar chant is the *Veni Sancte Spiritus*, which the composer sets to a sumptuous double choir. The momentary move to triple time (in honour of the third person of the Trinity, perhaps?) brings a pleasing lilt, transfiguring it.

By now those familiar with the series will know what to expect; but the danger of over-familiarity I broached in reviewing Vol 4 seems to have receded. The energy that The Sixteen bring to their Palestrina is admirable, though I continue to hope for a surprise in the format to keep the series on its toes. **Fabrice Fitch**

Penderecki

'Choral Works, Vol 2'

Missa brevis. Psalms of David. Iz glubiny wozwach k tiebie (Gospodi Psalm 129). Utrenja II - Ashche i wo grob z jutrznii II. Kaddish. O gloriosa virginum
Polish Chamber Choir; Haba Percussion Group; Kraków Philharmonic Soloists / Jan Łukaszewski
Dux (F) DUX0964 (43' • DDD)



By his own admission, the Polish composer Krzysztof Penderecki has 'spent decades searching for and discovering new sounds'. Nowhere are the breadth and variety of

these discoveries more evident than on the latest disc in Dux's Penderecki Special Edition series – a second volume of choral works performed by the Polish Chamber Choir. The repertoire here stretches from the composer's earliest choral work, the *Psalms of David* (1958), to his *Missa brevis* (completed in 2012) – from ferocious, percussion-driven violence to unaccompanied neo-classical sweetness, via the chant-inspired formality of *Utrenja*. The guiding thread through music constantly evolving and reimagining itself is Catholicism and its liturgy.

Commissioned by the Bach Archive in Leizig for the 800th anniversary of St Thomas's Church, the *Missa brevis* is written with the particular sonority of children's voices in mind. The unaccompanied polyphonic lines look back to the Renaissance without ever surrendering to pastiche, distilling the essence of the Mass without losing its spiritual scope. So excellent in Vol 1 of Penderecki's choral music, the Polish Chamber Choir here suffer from confining themselves to a childlike whiteness of tone. Under Jan Łukaszewski's direction, the upper voices particularly feel pinched and one-dimensional, lacking the bloom that emerges to colour the *Psalms of David* and the glorious setting of Psalm 129. The men, however, bring exceptional warmth and depth to 'Ashche i wo grob z jutrznii' from *Utrenja II*, offering a sound always rooted in the bass.

Penderecki's choral music might be less familiar than his large-scale orchestral works but it's a microcosm of this composer's extraordinary breadth. This disc is an essential addition to a slim recording catalogue, and if I wish that the singers had found the muscular flexibility of the Netherlands Chamber Choir's 2004 album of Penderecki (Globe), then that's just a small quibble. **Alexandra Coghlan**

Perez

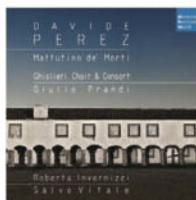
Mattutino de' morti

Roberta Invernizzi sop **Salvo Vitale** bass

Ghislieri Choir and Consort / Giulio Prandi

Deutsche Harmonia Mundi (F) 88843 05102-2

(70' • DDD)



The Neapolitan composer Davide Perez (1711-78) settled in Lisbon and his mastery earned him respect in London: he became an honorary member of the Academy of Ancient Music in 1774, in which year Robert Bremner published a

lavish edition of *Mattutino de' morti*. The only full-scale work printed during Perez's lifetime, it was first performed for the Portuguese royal family's pilgrimage to the Sanctuary of Nossa Senhora at Cabo Espichel in 1770 but soon thereafter was adopted by the Confraternity of St Cecilia for its annual commemorations of deceased musicians until long into the 19th century.

The musical forces of Pavia's historic Ghislieri college give accomplished performances of all three nocturnes that feature punctuating horns, alert strings, disciplined choral singing, eloquent solo voice passages, operatic quartets and telling use of woodwinds for special illustrative effect (such as prominent bassoons at the beginning of the third nocturne). The first nocturne has an outstanding moment of unaccompanied choral counterpoint to gently illuminate the sentence 'For that I have sinned too much in my life'. The second nocturne shows the engaging imagination of the composer and the qualities of his modern-day interpreters: Salvo Vitale's enthralling lowest notes illustrate the depths of despair in 'De profundis clamavi' and Roberta Invernizzi's hushed singing is captivatingly penitent in 'Dirige Domine Deus'. Dropping string figures and solo voices deployed for the passage 'et lux perpetua' towards the end of the second nocturne remind us that Perez was a close contemporary of Pergolesi but the flowing textures and contrasting moods reveal him as an original master whose music deserves a fuller restoration.

David Vickers

Pergament

The Jewish Song

birgit nordin sop **sven-olof eliasson** ten

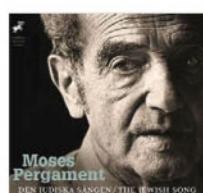
Stockholm Philharmonic Choir; Royal Stockholm

Philharmonic Orchestra / James DePreist

Caprice (F) CAP21 834 (76' • ADD)

Recorded live at the Stockholm Concert Hall,

February 3, 1974. From (C) CAP2003, CAP2013



Moses Pergament (1893-1977) has been described as 'one of the best-kept secrets of Swedish music', although he was born in Finland into a Swedish-speaking Jewish family the origins of which lay in Lithuania. Always something of an outsider in Sweden's conservative musical environment, he was a fine composer who made his name first as a trenchant critic and supporter of new music, including jazz.

The choral symphony *The Jewish Song* (1944) is perhaps his most special work,

standing in his output much as Tippett's *A Child of Our Time* or Hilding Rosenberg's *The Revelation of St John the Divine* does in theirs. Pergament's topical subject was the oppression of the Jews ('Deutschland über alles' is used, most tellingly in the 'Intermezzo drammatico'), the music setting powerful poems of Ragnar Josephson. The whole is a work of searing intensity that manages with remarkable skill – and no little humanity – to achieve serenity in the final pair of its 13 movements.

Pergament's use of the term 'choral symphony' to describe the structure should not be pursued too far: this is an oratorio in the grand manner, urgently communicative even in the few passages where musical development marks time. This performance is from 1974 (the work has seemingly lain unperformed since) and scrubs up quite well, although the sound is studio-bound and harsh by modern standards. I cannot say I warmed to Birgit Nordin's at times shrill singing but have no reservations about the other performers. James DePreist directs a taut and involving account which deserves wide exposure – as indeed does *The Jewish Song* itself.

Guy Rickards

Schubert

Winterreise, D911

Jan Kobow ten Christoph Hammer pf

ATMA Classique Ⓜ ACD2 2536 (63' • DDD)



Though Schubert's great song-cycle has had its day with period instruments, this recording has some differences that allow it to stand as an important alternative to the recent, starry, traditional-instrument *Winterreise* recordings. The instrument at hand is a restored Brodmann Hammerflügel made around 1810, tuned in an unequal temperament in a manner that was described as 'uneven hovering', and the songs are sung in the original keys, which vary considerably from how they were published. For example, the contrast between E major in the nostalgic backwards look of 'Der Lindenbaum' with the grim present of 'Wasserflut', restored to its original key of F sharp minor, gives an appropriate sense of turning the page, starting a new chapter in the journey.

Performance-wise, Kobow tends to stand back and let the music do much of the work – an admirable approach for a recording whose general tack is showing what's really there in the piece. So its playing field is

about as far as one can get from the more operatic approach exemplified by Jonas Kaufmann's excellent Sony recording, though not going quite for the intimately scaled Schubert of James Gilchrist. You don't have to know that Kobow is a native German-speaker to feel an extra authority in the way the phrases follow the subtle lead of the text's nuances. The voice itself is slim and non-operatic, with a control of vibrato and breath support that allows some wonderfully expansive interpretative options. Some of the more hectic songs, such as 'Rückblick' and 'Mut!' fare less well because the voice simply isn't suited to higher-velocity music. However, the final songs, expressing numbed resignation, come off beautifully thanks to the simplicity of Kobow's delivery, which has just the right kind of implication for the listener to conjure up the spare but vivid scenes described in the words – seconded by Hammer's ability to subtly characterise the music's imagery. Period performances can feel expressively restricted. This one does not. **David Patrick Stearns**

Selected comparisons:

Kaufmann, *Deutsch* (5/14) (SONY) 88883 79565-2

Gilchrist, *Tilbrook* (ORCH) ORC100018 or ORC100034

Spoehr

Der Fall Babylons, WoO63

Ekaterina Kudryavtseva sop Anne Schuldt mez

Matthias Stier ten Rossen Krastev, Dirk Schmidt

basses Braunschweig Concert Choir and State

Orchestra / Matthias Stanze

Coviello Ⓜ ② COV91406 (113' • DDD/DSD)

Recorded live



Some works don't define their era but merely recall it. So listeners would have to be rather fascinated by the Biedermeier world of 1840s Germany to love Louis Spohr's *Der Fall Babylons*, the last of several oratorios written by a composer now best known for his many violin concertos. Early on, you wonder how such music, which is agreeable in a middling sort of way, could be overlooked. Soon, you discover that what you hear in those opening moments is what you get, at least throughout most of the 60-minute first part. The characterisation of the Israelite liberation from the Babylonian Belshazzar has such well-mannered sameness that you rejoice at the appearance of momentary counterpoint in the Chorus of the Jews that ends Part 1, before realising how much aural expectations have been lowered in a piece whose 11 characters have generic names



SU 4133-2

Václav Neumann
Early Recordings / 1953-68
Prague Symphony Orchestra,
Czech Philharmonic Orchestra



SU 4147-2

Hindemith / Music for Viola
Sonatas Op. 11/4, 5, Op. 25/1, Trauermusik
Jitka Hosprová – viola



SU 4159-2

Jan Novák / Choral Works
Martinů Voices, chorusmaster Lukáš Vasilek



SU 4162-2

Ida Haendel / Prague Recordings 1957-65
Alfréd Holeček – piano
Czech Philharmonic Orchestra / Karel Ančerl
Prague Symphony Orchestra / Václav Smetáček

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such as 'A Jewish Man', with musical characterisation to match.

The second half has bits of invention, with some out-of-left-field solo wind- and violin-writing that convey otherworldly omens in the air. The recitatives take on some dramatic heat. The lightly accompanied vocal writing of the Quartet of the Jews is the one bit I'd welcome hearing again, but that only accounts for a fraction of this 100-minute piece. The finale conveys a certain grandeur if only because so many ideas, however mediocre, are piled on top of each other. Braunschweig's Louis Spohr Society would no doubt disagree vehemently. But any composer revival requires empathy well outside of the core followers. And I don't see that happening, at least with this recording.

The performance is that of a good provincial choral society with conductor Matthias Stanze keeping the large oratorio forces in line. But this is a piece that needs special pleading, assuming that such a quality is possible with music so limited in range and expression. Most of the soloists do their job, some better than others (such as mezzo-soprano Anne Schuldt in a variety of roles), while others are barely worthy of the microphone that recorded them.

David Patrick Stearns

Westbrook



Glad Day Live

Phil Minton, Kate Westbrook *sgrs* Mike Westbrook

pf Karen Street *acco* Billy Thompson *vn* Steve

Berry db London College of Music Chamber Choir

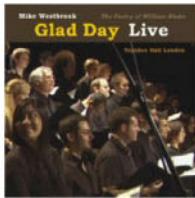
/ Paul Ayres

Westbrook Records *¶* (2) (CD + *DVD*)

WRO02DVD5-WRO02CD2 (77' • DDD • NTSC)

Recorded live at Toynbee Hall, London,

December 6, 2008



Every time Mike Westbrook records *Glad Day* – his much-loved settings of William Blake for two solo voices, choir and ensemble – the instrumentation becomes smaller as the vision grows grander. True enough, those who value Westbrook as foremost a 'jazz composer' – many say Britain's greatest – might regret the jettisoning of big-band splendour that fuelled his original grand design in 1980. A 1997 remake stripped the scoring back to three saxophones and rhythm section, and this new version, recorded live in 2008, reduces further: violin, accordion, acoustic bass and Westbrook's piano now carry the weight

of material once propped up by an Ellingtonian-size big band.

But, as Blake said, fire will find its form, and this *Glad Day* represents the perfect convergence of content and form. Violin, accordion and bass put you in mind of Kurt Weill or of Stravinsky's *Soldier's Tale*, and this playful fantasy of an imaginary folk group is a powerful one – a troupe of minstrels from Blake's own time who have somehow managed to sneak back through a time portal to the modern age.

Vocalists Phil Minton and Kate Westbrook (Mike's wife) have been with the project in all its various incarnations, and through their onstage personae Blake's poetic imagery is reborn. Minton owns one of the most astonishing vocal instruments around. In 'London Song' his quivering, resonant *bel canto* injects the music with ecstatic exhilaration, a little danger even. On 'Long John Brown and Little Mary Bell' he lets rip with his trademark improvised, abstract yodelling vocalisations: an unshakable force of nature. Kate Westbrook has a jazz singer's impulse for tonal inflection and rhythmic elasticity combined with the deportment of a great actress.

'London Song' begins with a representation of chaos: vocal whispers and muffled cries from the London College of Music's Chamber Choir which meander urgently towards an anchoring tonality. Westbrook's choral writing is stylistically apposite, pitching up somewhere between formal hymnody and hot gospel – 'I see thy form' subtlety acknowledges 'Jerusalem' while 'The Tyger and the Lamb' is kept merrily on the boil over Steve Berry's brawny, swingy bass vamp. Billy Thompson's extended violin solos are a joy throughout. Westbrook's jazz roots are clear; and Blake's images burn as bright as fire. Philip Clark

A quattro cori'

Benevoli *Missa In diluvio aquarum multarum*^a

CFC Fasch *Missa a 16 voci in quattro cori*^b

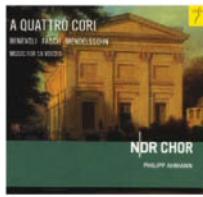
Mendelssohn *Hora est*^c

NDR Choir / Philipp Ahmann with

Christoph Harer *vc* Barbara Messmer *vion* ^aDennis

Götte *theo* ^aKlaus Eichhorn, ^bJörg Jacobi *org*

Es-Dur *¶* ES2049 (75' • DDD)



The 1783 trip to Italy of the musician and writer JF Reichardt had far-reaching implications. He returned to his native Germany with Orazio Benevoli's large-scale *In diluvio aquarum multarum* for 16 voices and showed it to his colleague

Carl Fasch, who in turn was so inspired by it that he wrote something similar.

Together, these two pieces became the Berlin Academy's choral bagatelles until Mendelssohn arrived as a student, composing the 16-voice *Hora est* for his sister Fanny's 23rd birthday in 1828.

This repertoire remains as demanding today as it was then, and on the rare occasions they are performed these works are noticeable in their uniqueness as polychoral pieces that contain neither the stamp of *Spem in alium* nor the sound world of Schütz or Gabrieli. When they are sung well, they are neither tiring on the ear nor muddy in texture, and leave space for subtlety and nuance in the music. There are a number of junctures (the 'Et in terra pax' from the Fasch, for instance) where there are chords placed either as muster points for the conductor and multitudinous singers or simply to impress the audience with their force, but overall this recording is more concerned with beauty. Sadly, it often misses opportunities for it, largely through inadequacies of blend and tuning or the premature loosening of its phrasing. Taking into account its mighty forces and the unforgivingly dry acoustics of the Church of St Nicholas in Hamburg, though, it does nevertheless maintain a surprising serenity. Caroline Gill

Leiden Choirbooks, Vol 4

The Leiden Choirbooks - Codex D

Music by Barbion, Clemens non Papa,

Crecquillon, Flaminus, IJsenbaert, Jonckers,

Lupi, Payen, Richafort, Rore and Verdelot

Egidius Kwartet and College

Etcetera *¶* (2) KTC1413 (111' • DDD)



This is the fourth double-CD of this ambitious project, of which each instalment explores the contents of one of a set of six mid-16th-century choirbooks preserved in the Dutch town of Leiden. However you look at it, a dozen CDs is a daunting undertaking, but the Egidius Kwartet and its eponymous College seem now to have hit their stride. The reservations I expressed in previous reviews are largely dissipated, for by now the two ensembles have well and truly gelled. The excessive restraint I also mentioned is absent: Jacobus Clemens non Papa's *Pastores loquebantur* is delivered with great aplomb, and Johannes Lupi's *Expurgate vetus fermentum* is similarly festive. The doubling of the cantus firmus (actually the tenor of the song *Fors seulement*) at the octave in



A tradition re-born: Mark Opstad and the children of his La Maîtrise de Toulouse explore music from the pink city and its surroundings

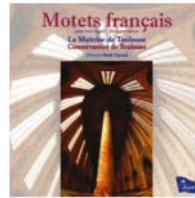
Verdelot's *Infirmitatem nostrum*, though puzzling, is done quite unobtrusively.

In terms of programming, too, this volume is a conspicuous success. It focuses exclusively on motets, of which this fourth choirbook includes both very famous ones and others much less so. One aspect of the genre in mid-century that comes across very clearly is the effectiveness of the repeat that occurs when the two halves of a motet conclude with the same text and music. To hear so many instances in close succession helps one understand why composers did this so often. Another aspect is the worth of the pieces by lesser-known figures. Nicolas Payen was hardly unknown in his day, since he headed the imperial chapel for a time, but his *Virgo prudentissima* is an instructive setting of a much-loved chant. For real obscurity, turn to the likes of Eustache Barbion or one 'Johannes Flamingus', whose *Da pacem*, though simple, is perfectly accomplished. Among the period's real luminaries, Clemens features prominently: his clutch of motets sees the College at its best. All told, there's scarcely a piece here that doesn't repay repeated listening. Clearly Leiden's church musicians were either well connected or exceptionally well informed.

Fabrice Fitch

'Motets français'

Bleuse in manus tuas, Domine^d **Boisset** Domine salvum fac regem^a. **Magnificat^a** **Bouzignac** Tota pulchra es **Büsser** Regina coeli, Op 115 No 2
Campra Diligam te Domine^b. Tota pulchra esa^a
Danielis Adoro te^a. Jesu dulcissime pastor^a
Duruflé Tota pulchra es, Op 10 **Fauré** Ave verum, Op 65 No 1^c **Libes** Litanies **Poulenc** Litanies à la Vierge Noire^c **Villette** O quam suavis est, Op 76
La Maîtrise de Toulouse / Mark Opstad with
^{abc} **William Whitehead** org ^{ab} **Géraldine Bruley** va da gamba ^d **Jean-Loup Vergne** timp
Regent REGCD420 (75' • DDD • T/T)



With French *a cappella* repertory already disappearingly small, that this disc limits its programme to music written for upper voices around Toulouse makes it particularly niche, even if it does cover 400 years. It is a cleverly chosen programme, though, despite the additional and limiting clauses, although it is hard not to feel that there might have been more opportunity for interesting repertoire – particularly in the first section, which covers the pre-Revolution period – if the

Toulouse brief, at least, had been loosened slightly. One newly discovered piece by the little-known composer (Antoine?) Boisset is enlightening; two might suggest to the listener that they may have preferred a bit of Delalande or, at least, more of the Danielis, which is remarkably redolent of Charpentier and brings out the unique character of French choral music of the period. The second half, too, might then have included some Massenet or Saint-Saëns, and for a disc as illuminating as this nevertheless is, that could only have been a good thing.

It is undeniable, though, that the disc feels as if it has been crafted with infinite care and love, and for that reason alone it is a joy to listen to. The sound is warmly encouraged by Mark Opstad (himself a product of the English choral tradition and responsible for the reinstatement of the Maîtrise) and collectively they have a strong sense of the heritage from which they come. That's not to say they lose any sense of being a French choir; but they sing with all the confident, sustained tone of an ensemble steeped in its own tradition, never venturing into the shrillness that is a genuine pitfall in French choral music of any period.

Caroline Gill

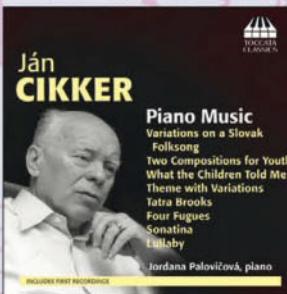


Discover the unknown gems of music!

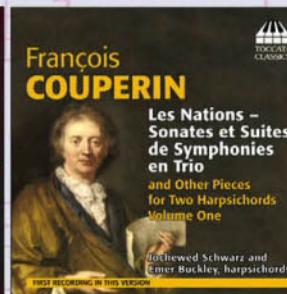
Some of the first recordings out now and over the next few months...



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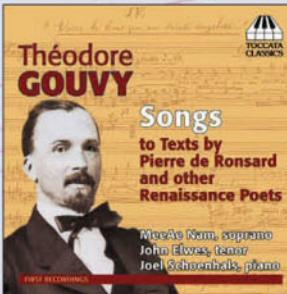
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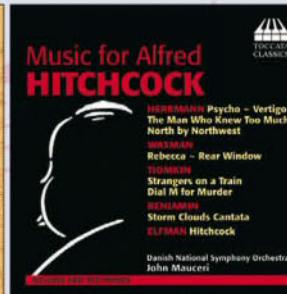
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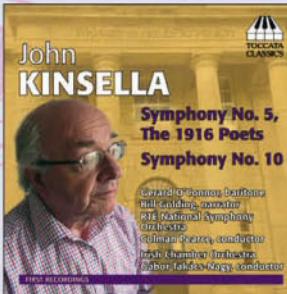
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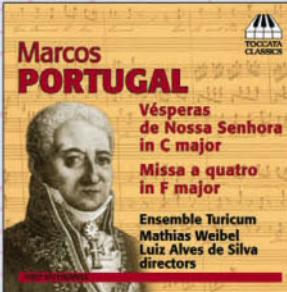
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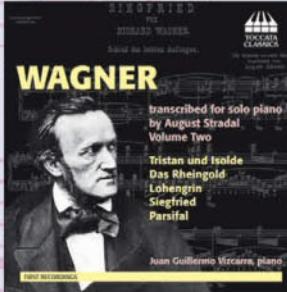
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Raymond S. Tuttle,
International Record Review

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GRAMOPHONE Collector

CHURCH CHOIRS OF BRITAIN

Adrian Edwards listens to a selection of recent recordings from cathedral and college choirs of varying configurations



Carefully crafted singing: Sarah Baldock's Chichester Cathedral choristers in works from Bach to Berkeley

These seven recordings can be neatly divided into composer-led discs and mixed-repertoire CDs. The disc by the **Chapel Choir of Selwyn College, Cambridge**, is one example of the interaction between collegiate musicians and young British composers. Phillip Cooke is able to compose distinctive settings of familiar liturgical texts, and acknowledges the influence of Herbert Howells. One can also hear the rugged quality of James MacMillan and the sensuous textures of Paul Mealor. Sarah MacDonald directs excellent performances with some beautifully sustained *pianissimos*.

The **Choir of Southwell Minster**'s recording of the *Messes solennelles* by Langlais and Vierne celebrates the French liturgical tradition. Southwell's CD was recorded in France's Sées Cathedral, with its two Cavaillé-Coll organs of the 1880s. Aside from a few untidy moments, the choir's singing is good and Paul Hale adopts slower tempi to allow for the cathedral's acoustic. Organists Hilary Punnett and Simon Hogan contribute organ solos by Duruflé and Demessieux, which sound glorious on the Cavaillé-Coll *grand orgue*.

Buxtehude's choral music doesn't enjoy the reputation of his organ works, and the occasionally uninspired melodic writing of his cantata cycle *Membra Jesu nostri* might not encourage a change of opinion. On the credit side, each of the seven cantatas has its own unique sound world through

the use of different keys with contrasted choral and instrumental scorings. **Ealing Abbey Choir & Consort** give committed, caring performances under Christopher Eastwood. The clean, youthful sound of the boy trebles just manages to match the full-toned singing of the choir gentlemen.

The **Choir of Chichester Cathedral**'s disc contains hymns, canticles, anthems and organ voluntaries which could all be heard liturgically. There's a satisfying and varied selection of composers, including JS Bach, Lennox Berkeley, Dupré, Purcell, Rheinberger, Tallis and SS Wesley. Sarah Baldock directs performances which are slightly understated but always have attractive *legato* phrasing. This is enjoyable choral singing which is carefully crafted, possibly at the expense of emotional engagement with the texts. Timothy Ravalde's accompaniments and solo voluntaries are first-rate.

The disc by the **Choirs of Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral** focuses on music appropriate to the liturgies of Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. The choice of composers is an ecumenical one, with the Roman Catholic faith represented by Tallis, plus compositions by Pablo Casals, Morten Lauridsen and Pergolesi. From the Lutheran tradition comes music by JS Bach, while John Ireland's pieces come from the Anglican repertoire. Under Christopher McElroy, the Liverpool choirs sing with tremendous passion and intensity, resulting in a wide spectrum

of colour and dynamics. They are ably supported by the expertise of organist Richard Lea.

In common with Liverpool, **Worcester Cathedral Choir** has boy and girl choristers. They are heard together in Elgar's *Doubt not thy Father's care*; elsewhere, they sing separately with the lower voices. Both sets of choristers are accomplished singers with a fresh vitality of tone, although the girl choristers have a brighter sound. The gentlemen of the choir sing with unfettered expressiveness under Peter Nardone and Christopher Allsop. Familiar pieces by Mendelssohn, Hubert Parry, Schubert and Stanford are heard alongside newer compositions.

To end on a high note, 'Canticles from St Paul's' features five settings of the *Magnificat* and *Nunc dimittis*, with music from the service of Matins by Malcolm Archer, William Walton and Alec Roth. It's thrilling to hear much-loved works by Stanford and Walmisley so well sung, together with less familiar pieces by Alan Gray, Michael Tippett and Charles Wood. Andrew Carwood and the **St Paul's Cathedral Choir** pay scrupulous attention to the tiniest of details, so that every word and note come across as something precious and sacred. The wonderfully colourful accompaniments of organist Simon Johnson are, by turns, both dramatic and lyrical. This is choral singing at its finest; in every way, listening to this glorious CD is a heavenly experience. **G**

THE RECORDINGS



P Cooke Choral Works
Ch of Selwyn College, Cambridge
Regent  REGCD411



Langlais, Vierne Messes solennelles
Ch of Southwell Minster
Regent  REGCD425



Buxtehude Membra Jesu nostri
Ealing Abbey Ch & Consort
Herald  HAVPCD382



Various Cpsrs 'The day thou gavest'
Ch of Chichester Cathedral
Herald  HAVPCD383



Various Cpsrs 'Catholic Collection IV'
Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral Chs
Herald  HAVPCD391



Various Cpsrs 'Now let us sing!'
Worcester Cathedral Ch
Acclaim Productions 



Various Cpsrs  
'Canticles from St Paul's' St Paul's
Cathedral Ch Hyperion  CDA68058

Opera



Richard Wigmore on a Mozart recital from Karina Gauvin:

'The precipitate leaps and plunges are confidently taken, the triplets immaculately even' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 100**



David Patrick Stearns reviews a Verdi rarity from Salzburg:

'Netrebko's treatment of the introspective moments make you eager for her to explore better-known Verdi' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 101**

Charpentier



La descente d'Orphée aux enfers

Aaron Sheehan <i>ten</i>	.....	Orphée
Amanda Forsythe <i>sop</i>	.....	Euridice
Douglas Williams <i>bass-bar</i>	.....	Pluton
Dorothee Mields <i>sop</i>	.....	Proserpine/Enone
Jesse Blumberg <i>bar</i>	.....	Apollon/Titye
Teresa Wakim <i>sop</i>	.....	Daphné/Aréthuse
Jason McStoots <i>ten</i>	.....	Ixion
Zachary Wilder <i>ten</i>	.....	Tantale
La couronne de fleurs		
Teresa Wakim <i>sop</i>	.....	Flore
Jesse Blumberg <i>bar</i>	.....	Pan/Shepherd
Amanda Forsythe <i>sop</i>	.....	Rosélie
Dorothee Mields <i>sop</i>	.....	Amaranthe
Mireille Lebel <i>mez</i>	.....	Hyacinthe
Jason McStoots <i>ten</i>	.....	Forestan
Zachary Wilder <i>ten</i>	.....	Mirtil
Douglas Williams <i>bass-bar</i>	.....	Sylvandre
Boston Early Music Festival Vocal and Chamber Ensembles / Paul O'Dette, Stephen Stubbs		
CPO	© CPO777 876-2 (79' • DDD • S/T/t)	



The musicians of the Boston Early Music Festival first performed this

charming pair of pastorales in 2011. They date very closely, from 1685-86. From the names annotated in the manuscripts we know that parts were composed with musicians in the employ of the Duchesse de Guise in mind; Charpentier himself was to sing the part of the shepherd Forestan in *La couronne de fleurs*. Only *La descente d'Orphée aux enfers* has been previously recorded, by Les Arts Florissants in 1995.

La descente d'Orphée, based on Ovid, is a two-act operatic fragment, possibly never completed. *La couronne de fleurs* is a panegyric to Louis XIV, apparently composed to celebrate the Truce of Ratisbon. Both call for similar solo vocal and choral resources. As in Charpentier's day, many of the singers take multiple roles in both works, one present exception being the tenor Aaron Sheehan, who sings the role of Orpheus, a finely nuanced interpretation, if less overtly dramatic than

Paul Agnew's 1995 performance. Amanda Forsythe is a charming Euridice and Rosélie, Teresa Wakim a beautifully styled Flore, and Dorothee Mields a compelling Amaranthe and Proserpine. Among the male cameo roles, Jesse Blumberg's Pan, Jason McStoots's Forestan and Douglas Williams's Sylvandre and obliging Pluton deserve praise. The soprano duet (tr 19) and male-voice trio (trs 28 and 30) in *La descente d'Orphée* stand out among the choral contributions in both works.

Charpentier's stated instrumental forces are modest: two treble parts, two bass violins and continuo (a third bass viol and harpsichord) for the opera and, more specifically, two treble violins and continuo for *La couronne de fleurs*. Both works include cheerful ouvertures and diverting entrées (dances), prompting O'Dette and Stubbs to employ larger and more varied resources to enhance their characterisation, though the dramatic action is accompanied mainly by the continuo instruments. The exceptions are the Prelude to Act 2 scene 2 and the series of 'Airs d'Orphée' in *La descente d'Orphée*, which, unusually, rely upon the artfulness of the two bass viol players, Laura Jeppeson and Cristel Thielmann. Bravo! **Julie Anne Sadie**

Descente d'Orphée – comparative version:

Arts Florissants, Christie (5/96) (ERAT) 0630 11913-2 or 2564 68686-3; (1/05) (WACL) 2564 61758-2

Donizetti



Don Pasquale

Alessandro Corbelli <i>bar</i>	.....	Don Pasquale
Nikolay Borchev <i>bar</i>	.....	Dr Malatesta
Alek Shrader <i>ten</i>	.....	Ernesto
Danielle de Niese <i>sop</i>	.....	Norina
James Platt <i>bass</i>	.....	A Notary
The Glyndebourne Chorus; London Philharmonic Orchestra / Enrique Mazzola		
Stage director	Mariame Clément	
Video director	Myriam Hoyer	
Opus Arte	© OA1134D; (F) © OABD7144D (128' + 23' • NTSC • 16.9 • 1080p • DTS-HD MA5.0, DTS5.0 & LPCM stereo • 0 • S/s)	
Recorded live,	August 6, 2013	
Extra features:	Behind the Curtain; Introduction by Danielle de Niese; Staging the Opera; Cast Gallery	



In the theatre Donizetti's well-sprung comedy usually seems to work like clockwork, so it is surprising there is no obvious first choice on DVD. Glyndebourne's production started life with its touring company, which explains the rather basic sets on a stage revolve. Nevertheless, Mariame Clément turns this to her advantage with a straightforward production that eschews visual gags and focuses on the characters. The opera is taken back in time to the late 18th century, crucible of the Enlightenment, when women started to explore emancipation (shades of *Così fan tutte*), and there is a definite English flavour, so that the final scene takes us to an afternoon tea party with the chorus sheltering under white umbrellas.

Any recording with Alessandro Corbelli in the title-role has to be worth investigating and his playing of the old curmudgeon, at once grumpy and delightfully vulnerable, is Italian comic opera at its most sophisticated. At Glyndebourne, he met his match in the charismatic Norina of Danielle de Niese. Flighty, quick-witted, always with some new expression flashing across her face, de Niese creates a brilliant characterisation, though her voice takes on a tinny, rather shrill edge as it goes higher. Ernesto, well sung by Alek Shrader, is played as a teenage brat, holed up in his bedroom with a rocking horse and two teddy bears. Nikolay Borchev's Dr Malatesta is youthful, charming, not quite Italianate in sound. For some reason the chorus scenes are played out by a white-faced, bewigged party of aristocratic observers who sit stock still even when the music is bustling; but Enrique Mazzola gets playing of vitality out of the LPO in compensation.

As long as the plain, 18th-century settings do not seem a disappointment, this makes a recommendable DVD

Don Pasquale. Alternatives include the Metropolitan Opera's lavish, over-the-top recent production and Muti's La Scala recording, also starring Corbelli and inimitably Italian. **Richard Fairman**

Selected comparisons:

Scala, Milan, Muti (4/11) (ARTH) DVD 107 207

NY Met Op, Levine (DG) DVD 073 4635GH;

207 073 4645GH

Gluck



Orfeo ed Euridice

Bejun Mehta *countererten* **Orfeo**

Eva Liebau *sop* **Euridice**

Regula Mühlemann *sop* **Amore**

Collegium Vocale 1704;

Collegium 1704 / Václav Luks

A film by Ondřej Havelka

ArtHaus Musik (F) DVD 102 184; (E) BD 108 103

(75' • NTSC • 16.9 • 1080i • DTS-HD MA5.0,

DD5.0 & PCM stereo • 0 • s)



This is the first version of the opera, composed for Vienna in 1762, with none of the accretions from the Paris rewrite of 1774. So there's no Air de Furies, no aria for Eurydice in Act 2, no Act 3 trio. In fact the original is itself pared down: the four-part Ballo at the end is omitted, as are the two dances in the Elysian Fields.

The recording comes from the Baroque theatre in the castle at Český Krumlov, formerly Krumau, the seat of the Habsburg Schwarzenberg family. Although it's billed as a film, the performance is made up of takes done live; from time to time the conductor and orchestra are shown, dressed in 18th-century gear. The candlelit scenery is delightful. The bad news is that instead of presenting the opera straight, Ondřej Havelka has chosen to put it, so to speak, in inverted commas: as the booklet-note has it, Orpheus 'steps out of his Baroque environment, exposes it for the theatrical world it is and disappears into the unknown'. So we first see him on his bed, buttoning his shirt, donning a scarf and tuning his lyre before being startled by the beginning of the Overture. At the end, instead of rejoicing, he watches glumly from the auditorium before walking slowly down a corridor and disappearing from view in silence.

Within the frame, though, it's well done. If the writhing of the Furies lacks conviction, the small chorus sings with impressive power and tenderness. Elysium looks appealing, painted statues and urns in a garden of cypresses and orange trees. Cupid descends on a cloud, complete with

bow and a quiverful of arrows. With her long hair Regula Mühlemann looks much too feminine, but she portrays the character with great charm. Eva Liebau is excellent as Eurydice, uncomprehending and then furious at Orpheus's refusal to look at her on their journey back from the underworld. 'Che fiero momento' almost has the force of Electra's final outburst in *Idomeneo*.

Bejun Mehta mourns Eurydice at the start with tenderness, and there's a nice sense of wonder at the Elysian Fields. I wonder if Gluck would have cared for his embellishing the clean lines of 'Che farò'. The period orchestra under Václav Luks is fine. There is much to enjoy here.

Richard Lawrence

Gluck

'Opera Arias'

Antigono - Quercia annosa sull'erte pendici.

Le cinesi - Son lungi e non mi brami. **La contesa de' numi** - Qual ira intempestiva...Oggi per me non sudi. **Ezio** - Se povero il ruscello. **Ipermestra** - Non hai cor per un'impresa. **Iphigénie en Aulide** - Cruelle, non, jamais. **Orphée et Eurydice**

- J'ai perdu mon Eurydice. **La rencontre imprévue**

- Je chérirai, jusqu'au trépas. **Semiramide**

riconosciuta - Bel piacer saria d'un core;

Io veggo in lontananza

Daniel Behle *ten* **Armonia Atenea / George Petrou**

Decca (F) 478 6758DH (64' • DDD • T/t)



The inexorable rise of Handelian *opera seria* has exploded the old-fashioned polemic that formerly exalted Gluck as a righteous reformer acting as some kind of radical forerunner to Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk*. A clearer view of the tercentenary birthday boy as an evolving pragmatist who wrote differently for dissimilar occasions and audiences emerges from Daniel Behle's performances of arias from an assortment of operas covering a 30-year period, from the early Venetian *Ipermestra* (1744) to the Parisian version of *Orfeo* (1774).

Seven Metastasio aria settings showcase the bright playing of Armonia Atenea and Behle's assertive singing. The tyrant Danao's fiery denunciation of his own daughter ('Non hai cor per un'impresa' from *Ipermestra*) contrasts neatly with the pastoral delicacy of the oboes and strings in Massimo's 'Se povero il ruscello' from *Ezio* (Prague, 1750); Behle's precise cadenza and virile embellishments are impressive, and Gluck springs a thrilling surprise with turbulent strings for the middle section describing a swollen brook bursting its banks. Behle is not quite so comfortable in

galant music that requires sweeter suppleness, such as the lovely 'Je chérirai, jusq'au trépas' from the comedy *La rencontre imprévue* (Vienna, 1764), but he is outstanding in stormier music such as Jupiter's thrilling soliloquy from *La contesa de' numi* (Copenhagen, 1749) – if only the booklet-note could provide some hints about what's going on. **David Vickers**

Joncières

Dimitri

Philippe Talbot *ten* **Dimitri**

Gabrielle Philiponet *sop* **Marina**

Nora Gubisch *mez* **Marpha**

Andrew Foster-Williams *bass-bar* **Le Comte de Lusace**

Jennifer Borghi *sop* **Vanda**

Nicolas Courjal *bass* **L'Archevêque Job**

Julien Véronèse *bass-bar* **Le Prieur**

Jean Teitgen *bass* **Le Roi de Pologne**

Joris Derder *bar* **Le Chef des Bohémiens**

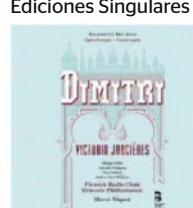
Lore Binon *sop* **Une Dame d'honneur**

Flemish Radio Choir; Flanders Opera Children's

Chorus; Brussels Philharmonic Orchestra /

Hervé Niquet

Ediciones Singulares (F) 2 ES1015 (131' • DDD • T/t)



The Palazzetto Bru Zane in Venice certainly does not skimp on its

championship of sidelined French Romantic music. Here, in one of its characteristically well-researched, critically balanced and handsomely presented books-cum-CD releases, it offers the first recording of the five-act *Dimitri* by Victorin Joncières (1839-1903), first performed at the new Théâtre National Lyrique in Paris in May 1876. The opera had no fewer than 47 performances that year and was revived in 1890, but after that it sank back into the ranks of the operatic also-rans. The plot, like that of Dvořák's *Dimitrij* (1882), has its origins in Schiller's incomplete tragedy *Demetrios* (1857) rather than the Pushkin and Karamzin of Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov*. In a sense, it is rather like being behind the scenes during the Polish act of the revised *Boris*, with Marina, the false (or is he?) Dimitri and a sprinkling of characters who have no place in *Boris* acting out a drama of their own. Think Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* in relation to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

Joncières had clearly absorbed what he could from Meyerbeer, Weber, Gounod, Verdi and others. Despite *Meistersinger*-like traits in the overture, any influence from Wagner probably lay more in the use of

leitmotif than in dramatic structure: the longest aria in *Dimitri* (which is, essentially, a number opera) lasts only three minutes. But in total there is over two hours' music here. It veers alarmingly from one style to another and is punctuated by some truly clunking gear-changes, but it has pace and punch. Within its conventional arioso-aria-chorus framework, Joncières finds a passionate impulse for Marina and Dimitri (or Vasili, as he is known in the first act), and the ensuing love triangle with Vanda (cousin of the King of Poland) adds a touch of pathos and tension. In general Joncières rises vocally to the occasion in the ups and downs of the heated drama, sometimes, as in the Act 3 encounter between Marina and the widow of Ivan the Terrible, with an invigorating thrill. This performance manifestly believes in *Dimitri*, and the fusion of fine, fervent singing and vivid, pointed orchestral playing lends it precisely the impetus and theatrical presence that, in its day, rendered the opera such a popular success. **Geoffrey Norris**

Mozart

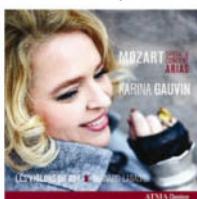
La clemenza di Tito – Overture; *Non più di fiori*^a. **Così fan tutte** – In uomini! In soldati; Temerari, sortite fuori di questo loco!...Come scoglio immoto resta. **Lucio Silla** – Overture. **Le nozze di Figaro** – Giunse alfin il momento...Deh vieni, non tardar. **Il re pastore** – Aer tranquillo. **Die Zauberflöte** – Ach, ich fühl's. Ch'io mi scordi di te?...Non temer amato bene, K505^b. Misera dove son!...Ah, non son io che parlo, K369

Karina Gauvin sop

^aAndré Moisan bassett-hn ^bBenedetto Lupo pf

Les Violons du Roy / Bernard Labadie

ATMA Classique  ACD2 2636 (63' • DDD • T/t)



Over the last decade Karina Gauvin has proved herself one of the most delightful of Baroque sopranos. Her pellucid tone, now flecked with deeper, richer colourings, and precise, nimble coloratura give comparable pleasure in Mozart. In 'Aer tranquillo' from *Il re pastore*, Gauvin immediately impresses with her care for *legato*, her pearly, aspirate-free runs and her deft negotiation of the broad intervals. Susanna's 'Deh vieni' is both radiant and sensuous, sung with a smile in the tone, while the warmth of Gauvin's middle register and her strong chest notes are eloquently heard in her subtle, inward performance of 'Ch'io mi scordi di te?'.

Fiordiligi's 'Come scoglio' is, of course, a notorious test of a soprano's technique. Gauvin passes with flying

colours, the precipitate leaps and plunges confidently taken, the triplets in the closing section immaculately even. That said, I could have done with a little more temperament, both here (even at the risk of perfect clarity) and in 'Non più di fiori' from *La clemenza di Tito*.

In Pamina's 'Ach, ich fühl's', Gauvin's elegiac phrasing and shading almost vindicate the old-fashioned, ultra-slow tempo. Elsewhere she is aptly knowing and pointed in Despina's mockery of soldiers' constancy, and brings an impassioned sweep to the little-known scena *Misera, dove son!*, with its limpid, flute-dominated orchestral textures. I rather wish ATMA had included more vocal numbers instead of the two overtures, decently if slightly cautiously performed. But in the main Bernard Labadie's *Les Violons du Roy* (modern instruments) provide a worthy setting for Mozart-singing of poise, grace and spirit. **Richard Wigmore**

R Strauss

Elektra

Evelyn Herlitzius sop **Elektra**

Waltraud Meier mez **Klytemnestra**

Adrienne Pieczonka sop **Chrysothemis**

Tom Randle ten **Aegisthus**

Mikhail Petrenko bass **Orestes**

Gulbenkian Chorus; Orchestre de Paris / Esa-Pekka Salonen

Stage director **Patrice Chéreau**

Video director **Stéphane Metge**

Bel Air Classiques  **DVD** BAC110;  **Blu-ray** BAC410

(110' + 23' • NTSC • 16.9 • DTS-HD MA5.1, DD5.1 &

PCM stereo • 0 • s)

Recorded live at the Aix-en-Provence Festival, July 2013. Bonus: Interview with Patrice Chéreau

R Strauss

Elektra

Evelyn Herlitzius sop **Elektra**

Waltraud Meier mez **Klytemnestra**

Anne Schwanewilms sop **Chrysothemis**

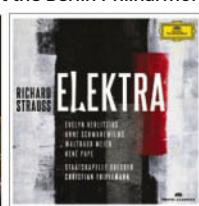
Frank Van Aken ten **Aegisthus**

René Pape bass **Orestes**

Staatskapelle Dresden / Christian Thielemann

DG  **DVD** 479 3387GH2 (104' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Berlin Philharmonie



For many, the German soprano Evelyn Herlitzius is today's finest Elektra. And the record companies seem to agree: these two releases represent her first appearance in the role on DVD/Blu-ray but her second on CD (the first, a live recording from

Amsterdam under Marc Albrecht, was issued on Challenge Classics in 2012).

Those who have not experienced Herlitzius in full flight in the theatre might be best to start off with Bel Air Classiques' film from Aix-en-Provence. That's because, in purely vocal terms, divorced from the remarkable physical intensity of her performance onstage, Herlitzius's voice can take a little getting used to. It's a slightly curdled sound, which can develop a beat. But the technique, though unusual, is solid, with Strauss's longer lines filled out in a manner that might be best compared to long bowings on a string instrument. She hardly tires, either, and manages the Recognition scene disarmingly, indeed with beautiful lyrical generosity on both releases. She performs the role with a dramatic commitment that few singers – in any role – can match.

It is Herlitzius's performance and the finely detailed, well-balanced conducting of Esa-Pekka Salonen (allied to brilliantly clear and exciting playing from the Orchestre de Paris) that are the main selling points of the DVD release. Patrice Chéreau's production (the final one before his death in the autumn) is a touch disappointing. It's a very grey affair (in a very big, very grey set designed by Richard Peduzzi), which makes excessive and distracting use of the minor characters and extras. Many of the key confrontations become diffident and evasive. And it's fussy filed.

One of Chéreau's innovations is to have Klytemnestra played relatively straight, rather than as the neurosis-addled monster she can be, and Waltraud Meier captures this more subtle character very well, even if the voice is short on mezzo warmth.

Adrienne Pieczonka is a terrific Chrysothemis, tearing into the role with luscious tone that thins only occasionally; Mikhail Petrenko is a relatively light-voiced Orest but acts with plenty of brooding menace. The supporting cast is excellent.

DG's new set is also based on a stage production, at Dresden's Semperoper at the beginning of this year. This recording, though, was made at a concert performance in Berlin's Philharmonie. Christian Thielemann brings a little more weight to the score than Salonen but, helped by a Staatskapelle Dresden on supremely responsive – not to mention virtuoso – form, he also conducts with flexibility and clarity. There are no major surprises but, paradoxically, his reading never feels predictable either. By the same token, the playing retains its patrician control throughout while never feeling staid or stuffy – and certainly lacks



In full flight: soprano Evelyn Herlitzius, the Elektra of the moment, appears on both Bel Air Classiques' DVD of the opera and DG's audio recording

nothing for bite. This is Strauss-playing of the highest quality.

Against this background, Herlitzius's vocal performance maybe sounds a little rougher than it might otherwise (it arguably finds a better match in Albrecht's ultra-vivid conducting in Amsterdam), but remains dramatically compelling. The glassy-voiced Anne Schwanewilms certainly provides contrast as her sister but her soprano is occasionally stretched beyond its limits. The Meier-Herlitzius confrontation is every bit as involving here, too, but René Pape is a more luxurious-voiced Orest than Petrenko. The rest of the cast is first-class.

A few things to note: both performances have the usual theatrical cuts, and Bel Air has opted for a dreadful old singing translation for its English subtitles. Still, with the galvanising dramatic power of Herlitzius at the heart of both releases – and much else besides – I wouldn't want to be without either. **Hugo Shirley**

Selected comparisons:

Netherlands PO, M Albrecht (4/13) (CHAL) CC72565

Verdi

Giovanna d'Arco

Francesco Meli ten.....**Carlo VII**

Plácido Domingo bar.....**Giacomo**

Anna Netrebko sop.....**Giovanna**

Johannes Dunz ten.....**Delil**

Roberto Tagliavini bass.....**Talbot**

Philharmonia Chor Wien;

Munich Radio Orchestra / Paolo Carignani

DG ② 479 2712GH2 (109' • DDD • S/T/T)

Recorded live at the Felsenreitschule, Salzburg, August 2013



As Anna Netrebko cycles out of *bel canto* and into more *lirico-spinto* Verdi roles,

Giovanna d'Arco stands at the halfway point, in a recording of this under-exposed opera that is cast in starry Salzburg Festival style. All are caught live at the Felsenreitschule with the Munich Radio Orchestra under Paolo Carignani in performances that are passionate and polished, in a handsome package with full libretto. It's an excellent introduction to the opera but not the best out there. Early Verdi needs keen dramatic consideration if the operas aren't to show their antecedents so blatantly. Example: Joan's climactic scene needs maximum conviction to prevent its accompanying clarinet seeming like more than just a rip-off of *Lucia di Lammermoor*'s mad-scene flute solo.

The basic nature of the concert-performance setting fails to give the opera that extra lift, partly because the characterisations aren't seasoned, from its stars to the Philharmonia Chor Wien. The stage perspective is stationary, so that the choral writing for angels and demons arises from the same recording perspective as the village mobs. And though Netrebko and Domingo have moments of great dramatic chemistry, other passages have primary-colour dramatic responses, making some of the more formulaic moments seem, well, formulaic.

Meli has Domingo competition on two fronts: in his earlier life as a tenor, Domingo recorded his role (an EMI recording now also licensed as part of Decca's Verdi 'Complete Works' box), and now, as a baritone, is his co-star, still sounding like a tenor with better instincts for projecting words and shaping phrases (even if the role doesn't lie in the strongest regions of his voice). In contrast, Meli's full-throated singing reminds you that sheer volume never passes for vocal charisma. Even the conductor Paolo Carignani suffers in comparison to the young James Levine on EMI.

Netrebko's upper range delivers operatic thrills (particularly once she's warmed up),

though her more dramatically vivid treatment of Joan's more introspective moments make you eager for her to explore better-known Verdi. But on EMI, Montserrat Caballé's coloratura and the authority projected by her middle voice feel far more natural and effortless. That doesn't mean that there should be a moratorium on *Giovanna d'Arco* recordings until God creates Caballé's equal. And for an opera as little known as this one, the circumstances of this new recording are perhaps the best one could hope for.

David Patrick Stearns

Selected comparisons:

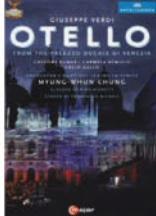
LSO, Levine (5/73rd) (WACL) 088219-2;

(DECC) 478 4916DB75

Verdi



Otello	
Gregory Kunde ten	Otello
Lucio Gallo bar.	Iago
Carmela Remigio sop	Desdemona
Francesco Marsiglia ten	Cassio
Antonello Ceron ten	Roderigo
Mattia Denti bass	Lodovico
Matteo Ferrara bass-bar	Montano
Antonio Casagrande bass	Herald
Elisabetta Martorana sop	Emilia
Chorus and Orchestra of La Fenice, Venice /	
Myung-Whun Chung	
<i>Stage director</i> Francesco Micheli	
<i>Video director</i> Tiziano Mancini	
C Major Entertainment (F) 716508;	
(F) 716604 (149' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i •	
DTS-HD MA5.0, DTS5.1 & PCM stereo • 0 • S/s)	
Recorded live at the Palazzo Ducale, Venice, July 10, 2013	



After performances of *Aida* in front of the pyramids and *Peter Grimes* on the beach at Aldeburgh, it is perhaps predictable that we should move on to *Otello* at the Doge's Palace in Venice. This production was captured live in front of an audience in July 2013 and, like Aldeburgh's *Peter Grimes*, shows what a good job technicians can make these days of filming opera in the open air, as regards both sound and vision.

The grand courtyard of the Doge's Palace makes a magnificent backdrop. It really does not need the projections added to enliven the visuals – storm clouds and stars at first, then giant astrological symbols and (to represent Envy) a wriggling snake. The central aim of Francesco Micheli's production seems to have been to give the audience a lively spectacle: the drinking chorus in Act 1 becomes a song-and-dance routine, like

a number out of *Oklahoma!*, and Otello and Iago are pursued by a laughable quartet of evil demons. When they start writhing round Otello during 'Dio mi potevi scagliar', one of the most intensely private soliloquys in opera, it is time to say 'No more!' Only a production like this could send Otello and Desdemona off arm in arm for a happily-ever-after ending.

The main strength of the performance is the taut conducting of Myung-Whun Chung, who barely lets the tension drop for a second despite the problems that must have been posed by such a spacious setting. Gregory Kunde, a genuine tenor rather than baritonal Otello, is strong and forthright throughout. By his side, Carmela Remigio's Desdemona sounds stressed, with an uneasy vibrato, not the paragon of vocal beauty Verdi imagined; and Lucio Gallo, an experienced Iago, is on effortful form, too often pushing under the note. The orchestra of the Teatro La Fenice know their Verdi and play with élan. Overall, though, this is no match for the best of the *Otello* DVDs recorded in the opera house.

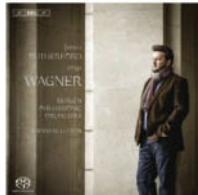
Richard Fairman

Wagner

Der fliegende Holländer – Overture; **Die frist ist um**. **Lohengrin** – Du fürchterliches Weib! **Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg** – Was duftet doch der Flieder; Act 3, Prelude; **Wahn! Wahn! Überall Wahn!** **Parsifal** – Ja! Wehe! Wehe! Weh' über mich! **Tannhäuser** – Blick ich umher; O du mein holder Abendstern. **Die Walküre** – Wotan's Farewell; Fire Music

James Rutherford bar

Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra / Andrew Litton
BIS (F) BIS2080 (79' • DDD/DSD)



It is less than a decade since James Rutherford won the inaugural Seattle Opera International Wagner competition but he has come far. He made his Bayreuth debut as Hans Sachs in 2010 at the tender (for a Wagnerian) age of 38 and his performances of the two most familiar extracts from the role show a young singer who does not sound stretched in any way. Rutherford's baritone, almost a bass-baritone, is dark, nutty brown in colour, and broad in its phrasing. He could afford to lighten his touch sometimes; but the deep seriousness of his Sachs, his warmth and generosity, come across impressively from his stage experience.

Most of the obvious major Wagner roles for him are included here. The Dutchman's

'Die Frist ist um' suffers from an intermittent vibrato at the top of his range and Wolfram's 'O du mein holder Abendstern' from *Tannhäuser*, after a perfectly poised recitative, is not quite radiant in its beauty. His Amfortas in *Parsifal*, though, has a wonderful, unforced dignity, and in Wotan's Farewell he is remarkably authoritative for one so young – noble, sensitive, no forcing, and with no fear at 'Wer meines Speeres Spitze fürchtet'. Andrew Litton and his Bergen orchestra support Rutherford with strongly delineated playing and add two tracks of their own. I played Bryn Terfel's very similar DG disc (4/02) for comparison and that really is special – what poetry Terfel and Abbado find in every piece. But Rutherford's singing is already about achievement, not merely promise.

Richard Fairman

Zamponi

Ulisse all'isola di Circe

Céline Scheen sop	Circé
Mariana Flores sop	Venere
Furio Zanasi bar	Ulisse
Dominique Visse counteren	Argesta
Zachary Wilder ten	.Mercurio/Apollo
Fabián Schofrin counteren	Satiro
Fernando Guimarães ten	Euríloco
Matteo Bellotto bass	Giove
Sergio Foresti bass	Nettuno
Clematis Ensemble; Namur Chamber Choir; Cappella Mediterranea / Leonardo García Alarcón	
Ricercar (F) ② RIC342 (138' • DDD)	



During the 1640s, Giuseppe (or Gioseffo) Zamponi became director of chamber music for the Spanish governor-general of the Low Countries, and his opera *Ulisse all'isola di Circe* (Brussels, 1650) celebrated the marriage of Philip IV of Spain and Maria Anna of Austria. Engraved illustrations of the sets and costumes from the original printed libretto are reproduced within three different essays in Ricercar's fascinating book. Apparently the extant sources of Zamponi's music indicate no rich instrumentations but Leonardo García Alarcón liberally sprinkles cornetti, recorders, bassoons and trombones – and employs a kaleidoscopic continuo team – in order to recolour numerous passages in the score (bassoons when the statues of Circe's victims sing, etc). Numerous roles have been transposed to accommodate Alarcón's chosen voices, and all such decisions are summarised amiably in producer Jérôme Lejeune's essay.

Furio Zanasi's Ulysses has the requisite weariness with hints of cunning intelligence when he lands on Circe's mysterious island and wonders why his advance scouts have disappeared (Act 1 scene 1). Zachary Wilder's gracefulness suits the mischievous Mercury disguised as a shepherd; Alarcón adds fidgety high recorders, just in case we miss that shepherds live in the countryside and play pipes (scene 3). Low recorders are used to subtler effect in the sinfonia that introduces Venus (scene 4), whose implacable fury towards Ulysses is characterised astutely by Mariana Flores. It is plausible that Ulysses finds it hard to resist Céline Scheen's beguiling Circe, and their love duet 'Languisco...Mi moro' (scene 6) would not be unworthy of Cavalli's Venetian operas. On the other hand, the Satyr's ribald song at the end of Act 1 sounds like Celtic folk pipers jamming with the Penguin Café Orchestra. Act 3 begins with a gorgeous string ritornello but halfway through something suspiciously like a glockenspiel begins to double the top violin part. In the epilogue, cascades of descending organ lines sound more like 1970s prog rock than early Baroque opera (I love both, but not necessarily at the same time). The pervasive levels of interventionism make it impossible to judge Zamponi's merits securely but at least the elaborate crew of performers produce plenty of sensual warmth and drama. **David Vickers**

'The Romantic Hero'

Bizet Carmen - La fleur que tu m'avais jetée
Gounod Faust - Quel trouble inconnu...Salut, demeure chaste et pure. **Roméo et Juliette** - C'est là! Salut! tombeau sombre et silencieux. L'amour! L'amour!...Ah! lève-toi, soleil!; Va! je t'ai pardonné...
Nuit d'hyménéée **Halévy** La Juive - Rachel, quand du Seigneur **Massenet** Le Cid - Ah! tout est bien fini...O souverain, ô juge, ô père. Manon - Instant charmant...En fermant les yeux*. Je suis seul...
 Ah! fuyez, douce image. Werther - Toute mon âme...Pourquoi me reveiller **Meyerbeer** L'Africaine - Pays merveilleux...O paradis **Offenbach** Les contes d'Hoffmann - Et moi? Moi, la fidèle amie...O Dieu! de quelle ivresse^b

Vittorio Grigòlo ten with ^a**Sonya Yoncheva** sop

^b**Alessandra Martines** spkr RAI National

Symphony Orchestra / Evelino Pidò

Sony Classical  88883 75658-2 (57' • DDD • T/t)



Much has been made of Vittorio Grigòlo's background, including early years in the choir of the Sistine Chapel and a brush with the crossover group Il Divo. When he

first burst on to the major opera stages he showed a very grown-up voice, capable of considerable thrills, if not allied to a very highly developed sense of style – or, for that matter, a robust technique.

As far as it's possible to tell, there's still a serious voice somewhere on this disc of French arias, but one that now often sounds undernourished and unsupported. At least that is what I can detect through the engineering – a treacly, mendacious travesty that positions the voice far too close and within its own hazy, reverberant acoustic. The orchestra is placed well back: its playing under Evelino Pidò is, unsurprisingly, bland and dutiful.

Sadly, the sound is well suited to the tenor's breathy, croony and self-indulgent delivery. Instead of *legato* lines we have a bumpy ride punctuated by emphases, snatched breaths and delicate sobs (sample the end of Carmen's Flower Song for an example). A booklet essay includes words from the tenor about the different roles featured but none of his perfectly sensible insights comes across. What does come across is a desire to straddle crossover and opera. That's fine, I suppose, and he wouldn't be the first tenor to have his cake and eat it; but anyone genuinely interested in opera will be disappointed. **Hugo Shirley**

'Semiramide'

Bernasconi Semiramide - Ah non è vano il pianto
Bianchi La vendetta di Nino - Sinfonia **Borghì** La morte de Semiramide - Figlio diletto e caro

Caldara Semiramide in Ascalona - Introduzione;

Povera navicella **Catel** Sémiramis - Dance No 2

García Semiramis - Già il perfido discese...Al mio

pregar t'arrendi **Handel/Vinci** Semiramide riconosciuta - Fuggi dagl'occhi miei **Jommelli**

Semiramide riconosciuta - Barbaro...Tradita,

sprezzata **Meyerbeer** Semiramide - Più non si

tardi...Il piacer, la gioia scenda **Nasolini** La morte

di Semiramide - Fermati! Il ciel minaccia...Deh

sospendi ai pianti miei...Serbo ancora un'alma

altera **Paisiello** La Semiramide in villa - Serbo in

seno il cor piagato **Porpora** Semiramide regina

dell'Assiria - Vanne fido, e al mesto regno **Rossini**

Semiramide - Serena i vaghi rai...Bel raggio

lusinghier **Traetta** Semiramide - Il pastor ase

torna aprile

Anna Bonitatibus mez **Accademia degli Astrusi**;

La Stagione Armonica / Federico Ferri

Deutsche Harmonia Mundi  88725 47986-2

(90' • DDD • T/t)



For Verdi it was *King Lear*, an opera that was never written, despite the composer's obsession with the subject. And for Strauss

it was *Semiramis*, a project which he first discussed with Hofmannsthal and tried to revive with later librettists. The deeds of the semi-legendary Assyrian queen fascinated composers from Vinci (1729) to Rossini (1823). There were two distinct strands. In Metastasio's *Semiramide riconosciuta* ('Semiramis recognised'), the queen is ruling disguised as her son (don't ask); she hopes to win back Scitalce, her first love, and does so. Another plot, including Rossini's (based on Voltaire), has Semiramis guilty of murdering her husband and unknowingly falling in love with her son, who stabs her in error (don't ask, I said). This lovely recital draws on both stories.

Vinci's was the first setting of Metastasio's libretto: an aria is included here, as pillaged by Handel for his *pasticcio* of 1733. More impressive is the accompanied recitative and aria from the first of Jommelli's three versions (1742) as Semiramis rages at Scitalce for spurning her. There are two examples from 1765: a leisurely, tender number by Bernasconi and a joyous metaphor aria (the shepherd, the helmsman) by Traetta. The latter features a solo violin and remarkably allows for two cadenzas in the A section: one vocal, one instrumental. Meyerbeer (1819) introduces a harp as the queen welcomes her guests. Both obbligatos (Luca Giardini and, on an 1824 Erard, Elena Spotti) are beautifully played.

Each disc opens with an orchestral piece: a three-part *Introduzione* by Caldara (1725) and a Gluckian *Sinfonia* by Bianchi (1790). The first disc continues with arias by Caldara and Porpora (1724). There is much coloratura and here, as elsewhere, Anna Bonitatibus is spot-on. The Rossini is an early version of Semiramis's cavatina: an extended 'Bel raggio lusinghier', orchestrated by Philip Gossett, and no 'Dolce pensiero' cabaletta. Nasolini's opera was staged in 1792, the scene here listed as having been performed in Naples in 1815. The notes say only that it has 'some Rossinian features'. The fact that Rossini moved to Naples in 1815 and that the aria anticipates the Rosina-Figaro duet in *The Barber* (or echoes Fanny's aria in *La cambiale di matrimonio*) suggests that the composer was the great man himself; and Nasolini's presumed death *circa* 1798, while not conclusive, certainly gives one pause. This set, sumptuously illustrated, is an absolute must-have. **Richard Lawrence**

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REPLAY

Rob Cowan's monthly survey of historic reissues and archive recordings

The Talich Quartet at 50

La Dolce Volta unearths some benchmark quartet recordings from the Calliope catalogue

This year marks the 50th birthday of the Talich Quartet, which was founded in 1964 by Jan Talich, nephew of the great Czech conductor Václav Talich. Their notably refined Beethoven string quartet cycle from the 1970s and '80s (for Calliope) won volleys of critical praise when it appeared and a new sequence of single-disc reissues on La Dolce Volta, taken from the Calliope catalogue, is both impressive and representative.

I was interested to make comparisons between the Talich's earlier and later versions of Dvořák's *American* Quartet, Op 96, and Viola Quintet, Op 97, the former from 1976 and 2002, the latter from 1993 and, again, 2002 (both earlier recordings are included in a three-disc all-Dvořák collection on Calliope, 7/04). In the case of the *American*, we're talking two completely different sets of personnel with sounds to match, the earlier (very drily recorded) version led by the sweet-toned Petr Messiereur, his approach lean and intimate, the later version, led by Jan Talich Jnr, adding the first-movement exposition repeat (omitted on the earlier version), sounding fuller in tone overall, as well as rather more flexible and supple. The contrasts between the two versions of the Quintet are less marked though I loved the rhythmic edge that viola player Vladimír Bukač brings to the opening of the buoyant second movement.

Smetana's two string quartets were recorded in 2003. Tenderness abounds in the beautiful *Largo sostenuto* slow movement of the First Quartet but I would have welcomed a more spontaneous approach to the outer movements, though the finale is extremely well played. The complex and more emotionally equivocal Second Quartet finds the Talichs more securely on the case, especially for the gaily dancing

(though harmonically ambiguous) polka second movement. This is a truly wonderful work, original in both its structure and its musical language, and there aren't too many recordings of it around that top this Talich version. Furthermore, it was a grand idea to follow it with Zdeněk Fibich's Second Quartet, which predates Smetana's Second by five years and shares with it a certain mood of agitated lyricism. Again, the Talichs offer a superb performance, in well-engineered sound.

Recordings from 2004 of the two Janáček quartets report a warm tonal blend that especially suits *Intimate Letters*, the playing earnest and conceptually intelligent, the Talich's musical focusing always secure. I was happy that La Dolce Volta was also able to include Ervíš Schulhoff's concise and imaginative First String Quartet, written in 1924 (the year after Janáček wrote his First Quartet), when Schulhoff returned to his native Prague after spending time in Austria and Germany. Try the tonally variegated finale for size (tr 12) and you're sure to be won over. A further fine trio of performances (recorded in 2005) features three quartets by Prague-born Johann Baptist Wenzel Kalliwoda (1801-66).

You need go no further than the deeply expressive opening of the First Quartet in E minor to gain entrance to a musical world full of attractive surprises, Spohr, Schubert and Weber being stylistic points of reference.

Highlights from non-Czech repertoire include discs devoted to works by Mendelssohn and Brahms, the three Mendelssohn Op 44 quartets (recorded 2000) henceforth a credible benchmark, the opening E minor Quartet – No 2 as published but the first to be written – setting out with an appropriate sense of urgency, the *Scherzo* a real sizzler

in these musicians' hands, the finale as played revisiting the unstinting passion of the first movement. Both Op 44 No 3 and No 1 are treated to performances where technical brilliance, tonal light and shade and subtle songfulness illuminate every page of the music. As to Brahms's two sextets (recorded 2006-07), there's an engaging glow to both performances, plenty of internal clarity too, most notably Op 18's first movement and Op 36's finale. Both works are performed with their first-movement exposition repeats intact. A most worthwhile series.

THE RECORDINGS



Dvořák String Quartet No 12; String Quintet No 3
Talich Quartet
La Dolce Volta (M) LDV254



Smetana String Quartets Nos 1 & 2 **Fibich** String Quartet No 2
Talich Quartet
La Dolce Volta (M) LDV255



Janáček String Quartets Nos 1 & 2 **Schulhoff** String Quartet No 1
Talich Quartet
La Dolce Volta (M) LDV256



Kalliwoda Three String Quartets, Op 44
Talich Quartet
La Dolce Volta (M) LDV260



Mendelssohn Three String Quartets, Op 44
Talich Quartet
La Dolce Volta (M) LDV280



Brahms String Sextets Nos 1 & 2
Michal Kaňka vc **Josef Kluson** va **Talich Quartet**
La Dolce Volta (M) LDV253



'Superb performance in well-engineered sound': the Talich Quartet, who this year celebrate their 50th birthday

Larrocha remembered

A significant performer anniversary fell last year: what would have been the 90th birthday of the fine Spanish pianist **Alicia de Larrocha**. Decca Eloquence has marked the occasion with some notable reissues (including a fine set devoted to Mozart and Haydn), my own favourite programming music by Scarlatti, Soler and Handel. Two of the Scarlatti recordings, Kk8 and Kk10, are new to CD, the former a regal processional in G minor with grandly brushed chords, which Larrocha plays with her usual understated nobility. The D minor piece features amid its mostly peaceful narrative sudden dramatic runs that could happily relocate to a guitar. Again the performance is compelling. Other Scarlatti sonatas, all played with persuasive nimbleness and an unfailingly polished tone, include the popular D minor, Kk9, and the dazzling, *scherzo*-like G major, Kk13, where Larrocha achieves some quasi-orchestral effects. Handel's E major Keyboard Suite closes with the celebrated *Harmonious Blacksmith* variations which, in Larrocha's hands, become unostentatiously grand.

But perhaps the highlights of the CD are the eight Soler sonatas programmed, comparative rarities on the piano, the elegant and touching D major, R86, running even the composer's much older contemporary Scarlatti close for originality. Here, for all Soler's Baroque decorativeness, his harmonic language often approximates early Romanticism. Another D major Sonata, R84, is proud, energetic music and as close to Scarlatti as Soler ever journeyed. Again, the playing is

flexible and stylish, the sound clear and well rounded.

THE RECORDING



Scarlatti. Soler Sonatas
Handel Suite, HWV430
Alicia de Larrocha pf
 Decca Eloquence ⑧ 480 6882

Kempff plays Brahms

Eloquence has also placed us in its debt by reissuing the complete run of solo Brahms recordings that **Wilhelm Kempff** made for Decca in the early 1950s, adding a fluent set of *Handel* Variations, a rather tight-lipped stereo account of the great F minor Sonata, Op 5, and a crisply despatched Scherzo in E flat minor, all three recorded for DG in 1957. Most of the Decca material, including all the 'late' pieces, the Ballades, Op 10, Rhapsodies, Op 79, and the Piano Pieces, Op 76, is included in the first of two all-Brahms double-packs (480 6639). But it's Vol 2 – which also includes Kempff's broad and cleanly voiced 1957 DG account of the First Piano Concerto under Franz Konwitschny – which is most interesting, principally because it includes earlier (1950) versions of the Rhapsodies, Op 79, and Intermezzos, Op 117, that have never made it to CD before. It's not difficult to see why, given Lionel Salter's scathing review in these pages (7/51), which is usefully quoted by Jeremy Nicholas as part of an informed note for the current release. The Rhapsodies have plenty of drama but lack the subtle colouring of the 1953 remakes (in Vol 1), especially when it comes to inner voicing, aside from

which they sound as if they were recorded on a pub upright that has seen better days. The first two of the Op 117 pieces are swifter than the later versions, the second of them, the beautiful B flat minor, quite without the fluidity that distinguished its successor. But the concerto and variations are in their way superb, as is virtually all of Vol 1. Just prepare yourself for some conspicuous tape edits, especially in the first movement of the Sonata.

THE RECORDING



'Kempff plays Brahms, Vol 2'
Wilhelm Kempff pf
 DG Eloquence ⑧ 480 8293

Gripping Bluebeard

Bartók's *Duke Bluebeard's Castle* is in essence about the inscrutability of an older man and the burning curiosity of a younger woman, an opera that's very difficult to cast and even more tricky to pace, given the risk of sinking into a lugubrious tonal quagmire. And yet, given a conductor of **Rafael Kubelík**'s calibre, there's scope for a gripping inner narrative – provided the singers fit their roles, which in this case they most certainly do.

Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau twice recorded *Bluebeard* commercially, but in concert any sense of propriety is thrown to the winds and he sounds (and sings) the part as never before on disc, commanding, compassionate, occasionally impatient and with a macho swagger to the voice that suits the role to a T. Irmgard Seefried on the other hand is the most girlish, innocent-sounding Judith I've ever heard, the opposite of, say, Jessye Norman (the most regal Judith on disc), impressionable rather than vulnerable, though when Bluebeard flings open the door to his vast kingdom she intones a rather short-breathed top C. Kubelík is magnificent, cueing his Swiss Festival Orchestra players to etch each scene with bold primary colours, even the mournful lake of tears. The climaxes are overwhelming (especially Judith's internment), even though heard through rather over-resonant sound. Not perfect by any means (and there are no ghostly voices) but wonderful! ☺

THE RECORDING



Bartók Duke Bluebeard's Castle
Soloists; Swiss Festival
Orchestra / Rafael Kubelík
 Audite ⑧ AUDITE95 626

Books



David Fallows reviews a series of essays on printed music:

'There is a wealth of marvellous material here, some of it highly original, some of it highly informative'



Philip Clark on a composer's explanation of his music:

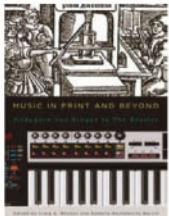
'The boundaries between recording and documentation dissolve into a format that satisfies ears, eyes and intellect'

Music in Print and Beyond

Hildegard von Bingen to The Beatles

Edited by Craig A Monson and Roberta Montemorra Marvin

University of Rochester Press/Boydell & Brewer, HB, 327pp, £60. ISBN 978-1-58046-416-1



This book belongs to that venerable tradition with the ugly name of 'Festschrift', in which friends, colleagues and pupils of a revered scholar make a collection of essays to honour the scholar's birthday or sometimes retirement. Publishers have always had a bit of trouble with these books, because they are often hard to market beyond a limited circle. So in this case there is no outward hint except for a cryptic dedication 'for Jane'; and you need to read quite hard through some 4000 words of fairly dense argument in the introduction before being told specifically that the honoree is Jane Bernstein, Austin Fletcher Professor of Music at Tufts University and a former President of the American Musicological Society, who recently turned 65.

Bernstein's main distinction is as a historian of 16th-century music: French secular music and most particularly the Venetian publishing house of Scotto. So the editors have ingeniously used the publishing connection to devote the volume not to the 16th century but to publishing, or rather to the issues that arise from the distribution and dissemination of music across the centuries. So the topics can vary from the gradual emergence of Hildegard of Bingen's modern fame as witnessed by the early editing of her music through to the difficulties of reconstructing the computer track of Kaija Saariaho's *NoaNoa*, composed at IRCAM as recently as 1992. And of course that opens the way for the snappy title: The Beatles do get mentioned but Saariaho, although far more recent, is not a name so suitable for selling a few more books.

There is another eccentricity that goes with the way publishers try to market this kind of book. Many seem convinced that footnotes at the bottom of the page discourage purchase, so any annotations are banished to a graveyard at the end of the volume or, worse, as happens here, at the end of the individual essays. It is not as though putting footnotes at the foot of the page is technically difficult: the simplest home laptop does it automatically. There is just this urban myth saying that it spells death on the open market. I have never met anybody who can explain why that should be. But nobody who has ever actually read a scholarly book like this can do anything but curse the manufacturers. Right from the eight pages of (extremely useful) endnotes in the first essay to the 12 pages and 149 endnotes of the last, reading this book is a true obstacle course. And what is doubly frustrating is the knowledge that all the writers here will have had the footnotes right there where they can see them on their original typescripts; moreover, they were presumably not warned before starting that the footnotes would be buried at the end, otherwise they would have found ways of redistributing or cutting down that material (it's not very hard to do).

Even so, there is a wealth of marvellous material here, some of it highly original, some of it highly informative. One example is the exploration of the differences between no fewer than seven consecutive takes the jazz pianist Teddy Wilson made of 'China Boy' in 1941, recently released for the first time and subjected here to the most detailed analysis with new technology. Another is the truly fascinating study – based largely on unpublished correspondence – of how his Jewish background and exile influenced some of the most controversial views of Edward E Lowinsky. Another explores how the publisher Carl F Peters rejected Beethoven's late Bagatelles, largely because he thought nobody would believe they were by Beethoven: 'I do not want to risk the danger of being suspected of having

committed a fraud by placing your name falsely in front of these small pieces'.

Further topics covered here include: the seriously elegant music typeface developed by Robert Granjon in the middle years of the 16th century; the often acerbic exchange of letters that surrounded the publication of some Italian music theory in the first half of the 16th century; music in Italian convents in the years around 1600; the odd relationship between printed and handwritten music in Handel's London; the context and meaning of an apparently shocking stanza by Heine that Schumann set to music; Verdi's views on how to train the next generation of composers; and how the fado singing of Amália Rodrigues on film was manipulated in the cause of Portuguese politics. **David Fallows**

Thinking Music

The inner Workings of a Composer's Mind

By Eduardo Reck Miranda

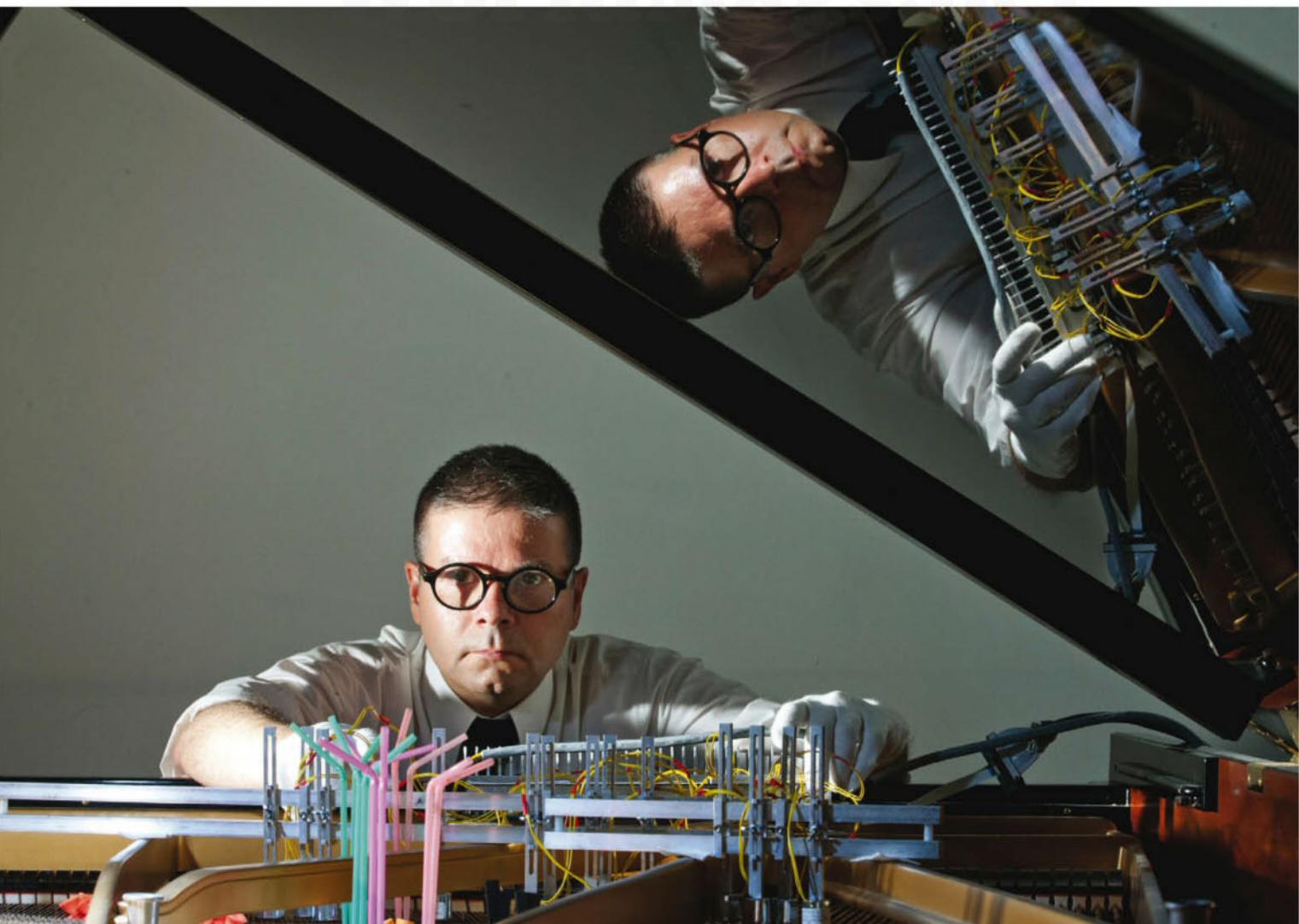
University of Plymouth Press, HB, 208pp, £49.99
ISBN 978-1-84102-360-1



Nothing if not ambitious, Eduardo Reck Miranda's *Thinking Music* aspires to be a literary *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

The processes behind the creation of Miranda's choral symphony *Sound to Sea* are opened up with note-by-note analyses and annotated explanations of his compositional techniques; included as part of the package is a full orchestral score and a CD of the work's 2012 premiere, recorded in Plymouth. Described as a 'classically trained composer and Artificial Intelligence scientist with an early involvement in electroacoustic and avant-garde pop music', Brazil-born Miranda leads the Interdisciplinary Centre for Computer Music Research at the University of Plymouth, where he is also Professor in Computer Music.

And generally I approve of such bespoke projects. In the not-so-distant future,



Cageian aesthetics: Eduardo Reck Miranda preparing his piano

when people are literally inhaling music, downloading it directly into their brains via a USB cable inserted into an e-nostril, I'd like to think that the sane rest of us will be consuming music through one-off, project-specific products like this: the boundaries between recording and documentation dissolving into a format that satisfies ears, eyes and intellect.

But, as much as the elaborate format catches my imagination, too much of Miranda's writing feels superficial while *Sound to Sea* itself drowns in the weight of unsustainable ambition. Introductory chapters by Peter Nelson (head of Music at Edinburgh University), Simon Ible (who conducted the first performance) and Miranda himself set the scene, but then the composer goes and spoils it all by saying something stupid like '*Sound to Sea* is launched in Latin, but with a twist'. This sentence stopped me dead in my tracks. What could Latin 'with a twist' possibly mean? As Miranda reveals that Latin words were diced up to form 'made-up Latin-like

words', the cavalier plainness of his prose becomes troubling.

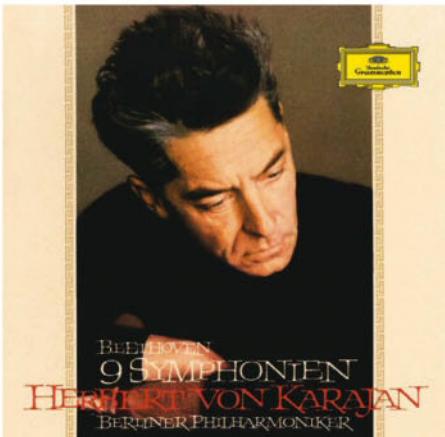
This is far from being an isolated example. When Miranda claims that generating musical material using his computer puts him in mind of Cage – 'this mindset is akin to John Cage's thinking when he preferred to set up the conditions for music to happen rather than composing music set in stone' – the point is clear enough but the rich complexities of the Cageian aesthetic are sold short; when I read Miranda describing how he discovered ideas of rhythmic phasing through Steve Reich's *Clapping Music* but that Reich's piece – by anybody's standards a faultless meeting of form and content – 'sounds somewhat dull to me', I don't feel so bad about how this review is shaping up.

Naturally, if his music cut any mustard none of these objections would particularly matter, but what Miranda thinks his music is achieving and the aural results of his techniques turn out to be two very different things. Fiercely detailed scientific diagrams remind you of Xenakis's various

writings but, listening to the CD, the conclusion that this a highly convoluted way to arrive at basic square rhythms and harmonic sequences is difficult to avoid. 'Intermezzo: Prototype' is one of two instrumental interludes dropped in between Miranda's choral movements. This is the movement that draws on *Clapping Music* but by applying the Reichian formula to 12-tone rows Miranda fundamentally misunderstands Reich. Phasing operates in early Reich pieces like *Clapping Music* and *Piano Phase* because harmonically unambiguous material audibly loops back on itself. You hear the process unfolding – but Miranda's web of atonal lines reveals little of rhythmic interest.

And so the muddle continues, the music a queasy cut-and-paste montage of textbook choral writing with Penderecki-meets-Lachenmann extended string techniques (and best draw a veil over a sudden Bernstein-like lurch towards written-out jazz) as the writing attempts to justify his composition. **Philip Clark**

Classics RECONSIDERED



Beethoven

Symphonies Nos 1-9

Soloists; Vienna Singverein; Berlin PO / Karajan

DG M ⑥ (incl 1 Blu-ray audio disc) 479 3442

This is easily the finest Ninth we have yet had in stereo... The first movement is fiercely Toscaninian, but my goodness how a modern recording adds to the impact. The woodwind are a shade too forward, but that is a small matter. The Scherzo is equally intense. Unlike Toscanini, Karajan takes the text literally without the conjectural whoops for the horns added by Wagner. I normally like the amendment, but with Karajan there



Philip Clark and Peter Quantrill

refamiliarise themselves with the Ninth Symphony in Karajan's first Beethoven cycle, featuring the orchestra he said he was 'born to conduct' – the Berlin Philharmonic



is no feeling of thinness. Again it is all a little more literal than with Toscanini with less spring to the rhythm.

In the slow movement Karajan scarcely achieves the hushed intensity or the pulsing electricity of Toscanini. Instead purity and simplicity are the keynotes. If after the first two movements the tension inevitably relaxes, there is compensation in the almost religious calm. The recording...was made in a church, and here one feels it clearly. The triplet variation in particular is radiant in a way that is rarely achieved in studio recordings.

The finale is blessed with very good soloists. Walter Berry might seem a lightweight choice, but the balancing help[s]. How much better to have a clearly defined voice than a heavier one which is badly focused. Two vocal moments have always barred me from enjoyment of the Klemperer – Hotter's painfully off-pitch recitative and Nordmo-Lovberg's frightful top B in the final quartet. There are no such enormities here. Gundula Janowitz is a beautiful young newcomer... It is a rich and creamy voice, and only on that fearsome top B does a slight flutter develop. **Edward Greenfield** (2/63)

Peter Quantrill It was 52 years ago, but this Ninth is much further away from us than it is from Oskar Fried's pioneering 1928 Berlin (State Opera Orchestra) recording. But by 1962 Karajan had been Chief Conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic for seven years – he'd overhauled the orchestra's personnel, laid plans for a new concert hall, and already begun to fulfil the mutually lucrative partnership with DG that would, for listeners worldwide, represent a seal of quality. There are people who think that one recording of any piece is sufficient, and I think that Karajan was the musician who did more than anyone through his recording career to perpetuate that notion.

Phil Clark Which makes you question why he kept recording the Ninth – two further versions to follow before he died. But essentially I think you're right: when Karajan cut his 1955 version with the Philharmonia he was making a record simple and pure (and a very fine one, too), but here (in his mid-fifties) he's mulling over his legacy and thinking through how to create a permanent monument. Check out the cover art on the original LP (when it was made available with

just the Eighth): Karajan suspended against a jet-black background. Striking the pose. The granite texture of his skin. His hair apparently carved into gravity-defying shape with a mallet. Karajan's image unmistakably resembles one of those commemorative sculptures you see liberally dotted around Berlin or Vienna. Designed clearly to focus our attention on the great man, it's also an oddly dehumanised, robotic pose.

PQ There is an idea – the Romantic ideal? – that a unitary, perfect interpretation can be conceived and striven for. Maybe all performing musicians need to believe that at the time of performance, while also striving for more insight each time they perform the music anew, but Karajan's view of the Ninth changed hardly at all over the years, as we can hear. Once arrived at, it is refined but not reinvented. His approach is the apotheosis of the Romantic view, post-Wagner (hardly modern except insofar as it reacted to the generation immediately prior to his), that a unitary meaning can and must be found in apparently disparate or conflicting materials. Take the horns in the trio – oddly neat and polite both in balance

and articulation when Beethoven has scored for something more extrovert.

PC But to avoid any confusion, let's make a clear distinction from the get-go between that Romantic ideal and a performance that might otherwise be mistakenly labelled romanticised. Not a note of this performance is romantic in that latter sense, and Karajan's relationship to modernity is intriguing indeed. I hadn't listened to this 1962 version in a long time, and a few pages into the first movement I thought, jeepers, back in the day people hearing this for the first time were in for a shock. Karajan's sheer determination to carve out interpretative terrain to call his own is impressive. The first movement isn't as wilful or capricious as Toscanini, but doesn't fit particularly neatly into any of the stylistically prevailing German models either: Klemperer, Weingartner, Furtwängler. The precision, clean attack, relentless pulse occasionally put you in mind of a neo-classical sound. And this lack of textural/rhythmic clutter and mannerism helps generate that unitary/perfect interpretation you refer to. You often hear claims that nested within this opening



Permanent monument: Karajan strikes a typical pose, his hair 'apparently carved into gravity-defying shape'

movement is Karajan's vision of the finale, and it's true that the composerly mechanics of motifs introduced that will blossom later can be heard (2'10") with absolute frankness.

PQ Yes, the precision-tooled regularity of tempo in the first movement is startling, barely allowing for relaxation even where Beethoven prescribes it, say at bar 507 before the final section of the coda. Set against that is a rhythmic slackness to the demisemiquavers in the main dotted rhythm of the first movement and the string parts of the *Scherzo*, sapping force and contrast from Beethoven's motive energy. No wonder Klemperer (according to Richard Osborne's Karajan biography) walked out of a performance in protest at the tempo in the *Scherzo*. The sheer speed (faster than Beethoven's metronome) may be less the problem than the lightweight gabble of strings. I can't hear a strong pulse.

PC Hectic and busy on the surface, agreed; and, yes, curiously tepid. You understand why Stanley Kubrick opted to use Fricsay's recording in *A Clockwork Orange*! Your comments about the strings are perceptive.

For me the timpani motors this movement, and if you're hoping those punctuating timpani figurations will punch holes out of your speakers you'll be disappointed. Those high Fs barely register, and Beethoven's dramatic timpani 'breaks' are weedy and not particularly forward in the balance.

PQ The timpani are certainly more forward in the 1955 recording, especially in the new Warner issue. For me this hands-off approach to internal dialogue and argument is part of Karajan's search for a unitary interpretation. There's almost no distinction between the two themes of the *Adagio* – one hymnlike, the other songful. Instead you can hear him in the rehearsal excerpts (released by DG) taking great pains to make the second grow seamlessly from the first.

PC Fair comment, but your remarks about the rehearsal excerpts (which I haven't heard) notwithstanding, I wonder to what extent Karajan is simply letting Beethoven's material do its thing: contrast enough is written into the fabric of the material – the harmony and sense of line in the second theme is distinct enough without needing to make the point

explicit. Personally, I find this movement wholly satisfying – in an ideal world, though, I could do with more give on those big moments of harmonic arrival (bar 121 etc).

PQ The joining of instruments to the *Andante* song is done with aching serenity – but is that Beethoven's vision? Maybe Karajan reveals how the hymn takes on the characteristics of the song in successive variations, until the song-theme itself is surplus to requirements. Is that convergence or synthesis? I still shrink from the yawning *legato* arch of not-quite-unison bassoons and horns at bar 128 – conductors from Weingartner and Toscanini to Gardiner and Rattle have given a distinct profile to each stone of that arch, striking against the offbeat string quavers to build momentum towards the climax at 131. The famous cello recitative of the finale also bears a heavy load of timber. Here it's not only anachronistic but also clumsy.

PC The finale: pacey tempos; ecstatically exciting opening. I'm prepared to cut Karajan more slack over his cello/bass recits than you – the thunderous, organ-like low notes are thrilling, but you're not wrong about a certain lumbering quality, especially the slurred notes. The chorus, magnificent as it sounds, strikes me as overcooked – not a choir, more a football crowd! But Karajan has extraordinary control over it. Sudden dynamic dips from *sf* to *p* whizz past your head with the visceral ferocity of low-flying aircraft, and I wonder if all this monumental giantism ties in to the underlying theme established here of Karajan very consciously putting a historical marker in the sand with this recording?

PQ Trying to listen past the rhythmic sloppiness and poor tuning of the 'Joy' theme *tutti* (5'05"), I can hear why Karajan and his vision of the Ninth are so popular in Japan. There's a Japanese Victor set of eight 1970s NHK performances of the Ninth conducted by Sawallisch and others, and they all broadly follow the Karajan model of a secular (Zen-influenced?) rite of celebration, seemingly untroubled by Beethoven's abrupt juxtapositions of genre forms, militarism and inward-turning stasis. In his book on the Ninth, Nicholas Cook considers that the work may simply have moved beyond interpretation. 'The basic problem is that we have perhaps heard the Ninth Symphony too often.' I stand guilty. I wonder, going back to your first comment, whether Karajan performed it too often? Nine years later he agreed to arrange the finale as a 'European Anthem' for the EEC. I'm not sure this recording stands the test of time any better than the ideals behind that proposal.

THE SPECIALIST'S GUIDE TO...

Works with narrator

Combining the spoken word with music is a difficult balancing act, writes **Gavin Dixon**, but when it is done well – as it is in these 10 recommended recordings – the dramatic impact can be overwhelming

Scene-setting, storytelling, sloganeering – a narrator can be a useful addition to a musical ensemble. Mixing speech with music usually involves some genre-bending, bringing opera closer to spoken theatre, or recital closer to recitation. The term 'melodrama' originally referred to a stage work in which speaking actors were accompanied by music. It was pioneered by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, whose *Pygmalion* – a collaboration with composer Horace Coignet – launched the form in the 1770s. In the following decades, melodramas were particularly popular in London, where the hybrid nature of the form allowed it to evade the restrictions placed on 'serious' theatre.

Many 19th-century composers took up the idea of spoken but accompanied passages in their operas, including Beethoven, for the grave-digging episode in *Fidelio*, and Weber, for the incantation scene in *Der Freischütz*. Concert works with narrator are a more recent invention. Strauss's *Enoch Arden*, composed at the end of the 19th century, brought the idea into the mainstream and influenced many composers in the 20th century as they experimented with new performing contexts and innovative genres.

Concert melodramas offer a range of unique performing opportunities. Retired singers may continue to exploit their dramatic and rhetorical prowess,

actors find a route to the concert platform, and celebrities from all the performing arts and beyond can appear with leading musicians and orchestras. Celebrity appeal has its commercial benefits, of course, and many of the works here have been recorded dozens of times, as record labels cash in on their star signings. But effective collaboration is just as important for a successful interpretation, and each of these recordings demonstrates a keen musical sensibility from its narrator, combined with a musical performance that is sensitive to the words, yet shares the foreground, not so much accompanying as illustrating and expanding on the text. 



Jean Cocteau (left) with Igor Stravinsky; Cocteau wrote the libretto for Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex* (see No 8) and often appeared – memorably – as the work's narrator

PHOTOGRAPHY: ERICH AUERBACH/GETTY IMAGES



10 Bliss

Morning Heroes
Brian Blessed *narr*
LPO / Michael Kibblewhite
Cala (M) CACD1010 (2/93)

Arthur Bliss composed this choral symphony as a way of coming to terms with his experiences of active service during the First World War. The text, presented by the narrator and amplified by the chorus, juxtaposes images of trench warfare with episodes of heroism from classical Greek literature. The work requires a narrator who will give it everything - drama, passion, intensity - and so Brian Blessed is ideal casting.



7 Honegger

Jeanne d'Arc au bûcher
Sols incl Marthe Keller,
Georges Wilson *narrs* French
National Orch / Seiji Ozawa

DG (F) 429 412-2GH (4/91)

Honegger was so impressed with Paul Claudel's libretto, detailing the trial and execution of Joan of Arc, that he set the two lead roles as speaking parts to prevent his music from obscuring the text. By combining spoken and sung roles, as well as a large chorus and orchestra, Honegger was able to match the dramatic power of Claudel's text in a work that draws on traditions of opera, oratorio and spoken theatre.

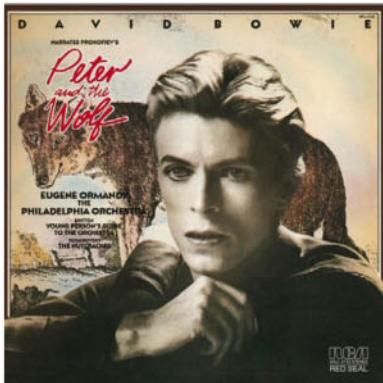


4 Britten

The Young Person's Guide
to the Orchestra
Henry Chapin *narr*
NYPO / Leonard Bernstein

Sony Classical (M) SMK60175 (1/63*)

The Young Person's Guide started out as the soundtrack to an educational film, *Instruments of the Orchestra*. Its text is by Eric Crozier, who directed the first production of *Peter Grimes*. The work has an alternative identity, without narrator, as *Variations and Fugue on a Theme of Purcell*. The narrated version has proved particularly popular with conductors of a pedagogical persuasion, including Sergeant and Bernstein.

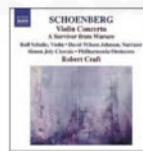


1 Prokofiev

Peter and the Wolf

David Bowie *narr* Philadelphia Orchestra / Eugene Ormandy Sony Classical (M) 88883 76580-2 (6/78)

Prokofiev's most popular composition got off to a shaky start. His work on the project, writing both the words and the music, lasted only four days, and the 1936 premiere, at the Central Children's Theatre in Moscow, was to a small and unenthusiastic audience. But Prokofiev's tale of a young pioneer outwitting a hapless wolf has since become a firm favourite. It has been a formative influence for many, bringing



9 Schoenberg

Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte
David Wilson-Johnson *spkr*
Fred Sherry Qt; Jeremy Denk *pf*
Naxos (B) 8 557528 (1/09)

'If thou hadst died as honour dies, Some new Napoleon might arise, To shame the world again...' In 1942, Byron's *Ode to Napoleon*, written the day after the Emperor's abdication, seemed grimly prophetic. Schoenberg's setting for speaker, piano and string quartet channels Beethoven, referencing the E flat major of the *Eroica* Symphony and motifs from the Fifth, in its contemplation of parallels between dictators past and present.



8 Stravinsky

Oedipus Rex
Sols incl Ralph Richardson
narr RPO / Colin Davis
CfP (B) 5850112 (9/03)

Paradoxes abound in Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex*. Its hybrid opera-oratorio form involves staged drama, but with only minimal movements and the singers masked. Sophocles writes in Greek, yet Stravinsky sets his text in Latin. The narration, however, is given in the language of the audience. The work's gravitas and monumental tone have taxed many narrators on record, but Ralph Richardson is pitch-perfect for Colin Davis's masterful reading.



5 Schnittke

Five Aphorisms
Boris Berman *pf*
Chandos (F) CHAN9704

Schnittke's *Aphorisms* are intended to be performed with poems by Joseph Brodsky, with one poem read between each of the five movements. Any of the poet's Russian- or English-language works can be used. Schnittke perfectly captures Brodsky's understated intensity, and Boris Berman's recording is the finest of several available, none of which, sadly, include Brodsky's poems. You will often hear them read in live performances, though, as well in various versions on YouTube.



2 Rzewski

Coming Together
Péter Forgács *narr* Group 180
Hungaroton (M) HCD12545

The Attica prison riot of 1971 provided the impetus for Frederic Rzewski's minimalist masterpiece. The words are by Sam Melville, a leader of the uprising who was killed in the ensuing police raid. Rzewski takes Melville's descriptions of the inhuman conditions, and of his calculated response, and sets them over a pounding, incessant bass-line. The result is emotionally harrowing and politically contentious, but makes its point with impressive clarity and power.



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recordings from Gavin Dixon's
Specialist's Guide survey

THE GRAMOPHONE COLLECTION

A bel canto opera for the violin

Paganini's Violin Concerto No 1 juxtaposes lyrical cantilenas against passages of breathtaking virtuosity, making huge demands on any soloist who dares to take it on. **Jeremy Nicholas** surveys the recordings and different versions of the work available, and names the violinist who 'breathes the same air as Paganini'

There is a suspicion that some people, somewhere, are rather sniffy about Niccolò Paganini and his Op 6. True, the work 'makes no special claim to exceptional profundity of musical content', as the Hungarian Leopold Auer, the great pedagogue of the Russian violin school, wrote in his *Violin Masterworks and Their Interpretation* (1925). And yet, he continued, 'It comprises some beautiful themes [and] demands even more than a perfected technique: the player must also command a reserve fund of technical accomplishment to offset any possible nervousness on the concert platform.' Berlioz was impressed by the resourcefulness of Paganini's brilliant orchestration as much as he was by the melodies 'impregnated with a passionate ardour seldom met [within] the best pages of the dramatic compositions of his countrymen'. Rossini must have been in Berlioz's mind when he wrote this, for the concerto owes more than a little to him. The opening quasi-military statement could be the opening of a Rossini opera overture; the final pages might well be mistaken for its ending. Throughout, the violin sings long-breathed cantilenas alternating with dizzying passages of breathtaking virtuoso obstacles, the equivalent of a coloratura soprano's vocal acrobatics. One might describe the concerto as a *bel canto* opera for the violin.

Paganini's artistic credo, the 24 Caprices, Op 1 (presented to the public in 1820), contained such sensational novelties as double-stop harmonics; left-hand *pizzicato*; and *saltato* bowing, where the bow is allowed to bounce on a string in a single restricted movement (the most famous example of this is the first theme of the D major Concerto's Rondo). All these elements and more are included in the solo part of Op 6.

It is curious that such an iconic work, groundbreaking in its technical innovations and rich in melodic invention, should have been recorded by so many and yet is played by so few in concert halls today. Its appearances at the Proms illustrate the point: the concerto was played in the opening concert (August 29, 1896) of the first Proms season by the Hull-born violinist John Dunn (1866-1940) under Sir Henry Wood. The complete work was not heard there again until 1951 (Zino Francescatti with Sir Malcolm Sargent), and that was the last time. This compares with Mendelssohn's E minor (109 performances), the Bruch G minor (43) and Schumann's lacklustre D minor (4). Even Spohr's A minor, Op 8, has fared better with three appearances. However, between 1896 and 1951 the work was heard at the Proms no fewer than 17 times in four different first-movement-only versions by Henry Wood, Fritz Kreisler, August Wilhelmj (he of the *Air on the G String*) and cellist Mila Wellerson.

Paganini composed the Op 6 Violin Concerto in 1816 while he was on tour in Italy. Although catalogued as No 1, it was actually the second he composed, the first being the E minor work now known as 'Concerto No 6, Op posth'. The score was not published until 1851, 11 years after the composer's death (he liked to keep his effects a closely guarded secret). The original orchestral scoring was cast in E flat major but Paganini wrote the solo part in D. He would then tune the open strings a semitone higher to give the solo violin more brilliance. (Paganini was by no means the first to do this; Mozart followed the same procedure for the solo viola part in his *Sinfonia concertante*, K364.) This is why the concerto is sometimes listed as being 'No 1 in E flat', but it is now

customary to lower the orchestral parts by a semitone to adapt to the key of the original violin part.

The 1851 Schonberger score (SCH hereafter) calls for one flute, two oboes, two clarinets, one bassoon, two horns, two trumpets, one trombone and strings. The Breitkopf & Härtel score of 1897 (BH hereafter) takes account of Paganini's later additions of an extra flute and bassoon, a double bassoon, two further trombones, timpani, bass drum and cymbals. For me, the BH version is preferable, bringing as it does an extra magnificence and drama to proceedings as well as providing darker colours for the sombre minor-key *Adagio*. Paganini's own first-movement cadenza seems not to have been notated, so most soloists opt for the one by Emile Sauret (1852-1920) – or at any rate a version of it, it being both extremely long (c5'30") and immensely difficult. Sauret, otherwise forgotten, was a French pupil of Vieuxtemps who not only taught at the Royal Academy of Music in London but also had the distinction of being the first of the four husbands of Teresa Carreño, the 'Valkyrie of the piano'.

PAGANINI CONNECTIONS

No matter how well you know the concerto, hearing it played in its original key (ie with *scordatura*) is quite startling and makes it easy to understand why Paganini's audiences and fellow fiddlers were so astonished to hear him play the work.

Massimo Quarta (b1965), a pupil of Salvatore Accardo, is soloist and conductor in what is claimed to be the 'first recording from the original manuscripts' (ie SCH), made in 1999. Quarta's attack is vividly projected, his intonation searingly accurate – though others produce more lyrical grace. The orchestra is only adequate –



Adoration and astonishment: the virtuoso violinist Paganini's performances frequently attracted both crowds and praise



J. Dannhauser's 1840 painting of a salon scene with Liszt at the piano and Rossini (whose influence is strong in the concerto) with his arm around Paganini

dutiful rather than inspired; but (and it's a big but) Quarta plays on Paganini's own violin, the 1742 Guarneri del Gesù.

The only performance on DVD that I've come across is also played on 'Il cannone' (Paganini's nickname for his Guarneri). It is also one of the few live performances of the work available. **Shlomo Mintz**, the Limburg Symphony Orchestra, Maastricht, and conductor Yoel Levi play with tremendous verve and authority. The accompaniment (using the BH score) is punchy and precise – in fact this

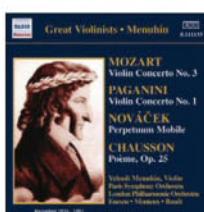
would have been among my top recommendations had it not been for a cut of 26 bars in the finale.

Another link to the composer comes by way of **Zino Francescatti**, whose principal teacher was his violinist father, who himself had studied with Paganini's pupil Camillo Sivori. Alas, all his various recordings – whether with Ormandy or Mitropoulos or live with Wallenstein in 1946 – are heavily cut, as is the live performance with Artur Balsam at the piano recorded at the Library of Congress in 1954, a curiosity

that boasts Francescatti's own reharmonised arrangement of the accompaniment.

FIRST RECORDINGS

The earliest complete recording is one of the top choices: **Yehudi Menuhin** and Pierre Monteux in 1934 (SCH). Monteux sets off like a greyhound out of the traps after the opening flourish marked *Allegro maestoso*. Apart from a large number of pauses, Paganini indicates only a handful of tempo changes in the whole of the first movement, but all soloists and conductors



BEST HISTORICAL

Menuhin / Pierre Monteux Naxos ⑧ 8 111135
Yehudi Menuhin was only 18 years old when he and Monteux made the first complete recording of the concerto in May 1934, just two years after his celebrated recording of the Elgar Violin Concerto. Eighty years later, it leaves most other versions trailing in its wake – 'a fusion of the carefree and scholarly', as the Naxos booklet-notes suggest.



BEST ORIGINAL VERSION

Quarta Dynamic ⑧ CDS260
There is only one choice if you want to hear the concerto as it was heard in its original tonality of E flat in accordance with Paganini's autograph – and it's well worth hearing. Any reservations about the so-so accompaniment can be ignored in the face of Massimo Quarta's brilliance. This is a fascinating disc.



PERENNIAL BENCHMARK

Accardo / Charles Dutoit DG ⑧ 463 754-2
Salvatore Accardo became synonymous with Paganini in the 1970s and '80s, largely owing to the recordings he made with Dutoit. Far superior to his self-conducted remakes for EMI from a quarter of a century later, Accardo's set of all six concertos for DG is an absolute steal.

adopt fluctuating tempos throughout. Some manage the relationship between these fluctuations better than others. Monteux is wholly convincing. Menuhin was then at the peak of his powers and few have equalled him in the drama of the second movement or the speed, precision and airy, dancelike execution of the Rondo played with the lightest of touches by soloist and orchestra.

Leonid Kogan's 1950 recording with Vassily Nebolsin and the USSR Radio Symphony Orchestra claims to be the first complete recording of the BH version. Kogan's respect for the score, his realisation of Paganini's phrasing and dynamics, and his consistently mellifluous tone at whatever speed or register, invest the work with dignity while retaining the thrill of a high-wire act. It's a pity that the orchestral recorded sound betrays its age and provenance. Kogan's 1955 recording with Charles Bruck, even with the gloomy acoustic of Paris's Salle de la Mutualité, is also outstanding.

CUT VERSIONS

I want to hear every note Paganini wrote, which means, sadly, that several otherwise fine versions are *hors de combat*, including two by the tragic, extravagantly gifted **Michael Rabin**. In the score, after the opening 12 bars, a second theme is heard in D major. With Lovro von Matačić in 1954 (SCH) this is ignored and a terrible cut is made of eight bars to letter A, meaning that you hear this theme for the first time not in the tonic but in F. A further cut of 57 bars omits the first statement of the important third subject, and the music resumes just four bars before the soloist's first entry. It makes no musical sense. The cadenza is by Carl Flesch. In 1960 with Eugene Goossens, in addition to the same cuts in the opening tutti, Rabin makes another one in the last movement, which jumps from letter L to letter R, omitting 151 bars – a whole section in G major with material that is otherwise never heard again. Sadly, as far as this survey is concerned, it's *au revoir* Rabin, who first made me fall in love with the work at the age of 12.

Ruggiero Ricci, a much-praised Paganini advocate, makes similar cuts. He recorded the SH score – at least, some of it – in 1955 with Anthony Collins. The opening tutti is a mere 26 bars long (as opposed to Paganini's 94), and another 26 bars of the finale are also dispensed with. It's all very rushed and rather charmless. Cuts also mean that **Ion Voicu**'s 1963 recording with Heinz Bongartz (BH), in a superbly focused acoustic, falls by the wayside, as does that by **Ivry Gitlis** with Stanislaw



Tricky: the violin's first entry (Wilhelmj version)

Wislocki (a 1966 account of an apparent hybrid of SCH and BH), the latter displaying some surprisingly scrawny tone and approximate passagework in the finale. Others who omit the G major section are the perfectly drilled 13-year-old **Sarah Chang** with the suave Philadelphia Orchestra under the unlikely guidance of Wolfgang Sawallisch in 1993; **Gil Shaham** with the New York Philharmonic and Sinopoli in 1989; and sweet-toned **Midori** with Leonard Slatkin in 1987. (In an obscure live recording

THE GRAMOPHONE COLLECTION

with Adrian Boult, probably from the 1940s, **Menuhin** does play the G major section, but makes another abrupt cut in the finale.) He is, though, far more technically polished here than in his 1955 complete recording with Anatole Fistoulari.

COMPLETE VERSIONS

Although the cymbal player might just as well have stayed at home, Zubin Mehta's 1976 account (BH) injects vigour into the tutti while his soloist, **Boris Belkin**, does nothing that a shot of adrenaline wouldn't improve. Decca's booklet and disc confidently state that the concerto is in the key of B major.

I prefer the French star **Alexandra Soumm** (BH, recorded in 2007, when she was 18), despite a routine accompaniment from Georg Mark and the Deutsche Staatsphilharmonie Rheinland-Pfalz and, in the first movement, a too-broad range of tempos. I suspect that Soumm would now play the concerto with a more penetrating tone and fewer of the unmarked *tenutos* she makes midway through some of the fast runs.

Ilya Kaler with the Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra conducted by Stephen Gunzenhauser does not go beyond an accurate performance of the BH score (albeit with a muted percussion contribution). The recorded sound holds you at arm's length. It is – in a word – bland.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

DATE / ARTISTS

DATE	ARTISTS	RECORD COMPANY (REVIEW DATE)
1934	Menuhin Paris SO / Monteux	Naxos (S) 8 111135; EMI (S) (50 discs) 264131-2 (3/07)
1950	Kogan USSR RSO / Nebolsin	Melodiya (M) D6391
1954	Francescatti Balsam (pf)	Bridge (P) BRIDGE9125 (9/03)
1954	Rabin Philh Orch / Matačić	EMI (M) (6) 679060-2 (10/55 ^R)
1955	Kogan Paris Cons Orch / Bruck	Testament (P) SBT1226 (A/02; 9/58 ^R)
1955	Menuhin LSO / Fistoulari	EMI (S) (50 discs) 264131-2
1955	Ricci LSO / Collins	Decca (S) (6) 475 1052 (1/04; 10/55 ^R)
1960	Rabin Philh Orch / Goossens	Testament (M) (6) SBT6 1471 (12/11; 9/61 ^R)
1963	Voicu Dresden PO / Bongartz	Berlin Classics (M) 0032402BC
1966	Gitlis Warsaw Nat PO / Wislocki	Decca Korean Imports (M) (4) DN0023; Decca/Discovery (S) (5) 534 6246 (3/69 ^R)
1971	Perlman RPO / Foster	EMI Classics (P) CDC747101-2 (6/72 ^R ; 4/94 ^R)
1975	Accardo LPO / Dutoit	DG (S) (6) 463 754-2; (E) 415 378-2GH (11/75 ^R ; 2/87); (B) (P) 439 981-2; (S) (8) 480 5117
1976	Belkin Israel PO / Mehta	Decca Eloquence (B) ELQ476 7488 (2/77 ^R)
1987	Midori LSO / Slatkin	Newton (M) 8802028
1989	Shaham New York PO / Sinopoli	DG (B) (P) 429 786-2GH (5/91); (S) (8) 480 6265
1991	Dubach Monte Carlo PO / Sasson	Claves (P) CD50 9204; Brilliant (S) (3) 99582
1991	Vengerov Israel PO / Mehta	Warner Classics (S) (1) 2564 63780-2; Teldec Classics (P) 9031-73266-2 (5/92)
1992	Kaler Polish Nat RSO / Gunzenhauser	Naxos (S) 8 550649 (12/93)
1993	Chang Philadelphia Orch / Sawallisch	EMI (P) 555026-2 (1/95)
1997	Mintz Limburg SO, Maastricht / Levi	Challenge Classics (P) DVD CC72197
1998	Gringolts Lahti SO / Vänskä	BIS (P) CD998 (8/99)
1999	Quarta Carlo Felice Th Orch, Genoa	Dynamic (P) CDS260 (A/00)
2004	Brodski Polish Nat RSO, Katowice / Salwarowski	Dux (P) DUX0463
2005	Hahn Swedish RSO / Oue	DG (P) 477 6232GH (11/06)
2007	Soumm Rheinland-Pfalz State PO / Mark	Claves (P) 50 2808
2013	Radulović RAI Nat SO / Oue	DG (P) 481 0655 (5/14)

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The Guardian (on The Sixteen's performance of *Jephtha* at The Barbican, January 2014)

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Just listen

Vadim Brodski with the same orchestra in the same Katowice concert hall, this time under Jerzy Salwarowski, is better recorded but with the same result. The Sauret cadenza and the last movement's harmonics sound effortful, and others have a more alluring tone.

On an altogether more exalted level comes **Alexandre Dubach** with the Monte Carlo Philharmonic Orchestra under Michel Sasse. Throughout the work and also in his own bravura cadenza, Dubach offers fearless, unapologetic showmanship (I loved his discreet and entirely apt use of *portamento* in the first movement) matched by the alert support of Sasse and his players. His bold attack sometimes comes at the expense of tone quality (for instance in the fast passages in thirds in the first movement), but this remains an outstanding performance.

Ilya Gringolts with the spirited Lahti Symphony Orchestra and the expert hand of Osmo Vänskä is well captured by the BIS engineers. Here the BH version really scores, especially in the slow movement, which supposedly represents a scene in prison in which an unjustly jailed captive is shown appealing to heaven for deliverance through death. Paganini wrote it in memory of the Italian actor Demarini, whom he had seen play such a prisoner on stage in Milan. Vänskä's *sforzandos* contrasted with Gringolts's plangent prayer, and the four episodes underpinned by a bass trombone, bass drum and cymbal *crescendo*, are highly effective. What I miss with Gringolts is one element essential to a completely successful delivery of the solo part: the kind of virile, heroic centre-stage attack that the role demands (Gringolts is often overwhelmed by the Lahti players).

A CLOSE-RUN THING

Maxim Vengerov has this in spades. Everything comes together in his 1991 recording of the BH score with Zubin Mehta and the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra. In a concerto that presents so many potential stumbling blocks, technically and musically, this performance sails through with flying colours: the accompaniment is scintillating, detailed, sensitive and conducted with panache by Mehta; the solo part is brilliantly executed – with spine-tingling pyrotechnics, and a rich, velvety tone in even the most demanding passages; tempos are judicious (though some may feel that the *Adagio* is a shade too fast); the acoustic is clear and focused; the orchestra-soloist balance is excellent; and the recorded sound is beautifully engineered. Vengerov plays the

full Sauret cadenza minus a few bars of left-hand *pizzicato*.

Itzhak Perlman

makes his own cut version of this cadenza which some may think is preferable, as it's not so overblown. All of the comments about Vengerov's version apply in equal measure to this recording made 20 years earlier with Lawrence Foster and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra – but with these exceptions: the first movement is marginally less exuberant, the *Adagio* slightly more intense and the finale, frankly, a shade flat-footed – more

jaunty than spirited. It's a close-run thing, but personal preference makes me go for the brisker insouciance of Menuhin, Vengerov, Gringolts and Kogan.

LAST BUT NOT LEAST

The final three recordings are all on the same label (DG), and all are exceptional in different ways. The first is the version long held to be the benchmark –

Salvatore Accardo with Charles Dutoit and the London Philharmonic Orchestra, recorded nearly 40 years ago in Barking Town Hall with the other five Paganini concertos. Should you want all six concertos (the earliest – No 6, Op *posth* – was not heard until 1973, when it was orchestrated by Federico Mompellio), then there is no competition either in repertoire or performance. Accardo simply breathes the same air as Paganini, tossing off the thirds, sixths and tenths with aplomb and spinning out the Bellini-like arias with heart-melting warmth. Dutoit provides superb precision accompaniment, of course, but my one reservation is that the extra drama provided by the BH score is reined in and too generalised: if you are going to use the added brass and percussion, then let their presence be felt.

It certainly is – too much, perhaps – in the two recordings (both BH) conducted by Eiji Oue. More than in any other version one is aware of Paganini's indebtedness to Rossini: melodic appeal, orchestration, theatricality, lyrical grace and coloratura display – and Oue knows how to deliver it all. Incidentally, in both recordings he is one of the few (Vänskä is another) to observe the full grand pause (nearly three bars tacet) at bar 385 in the finale.

THE GRAMOPHONE COLLECTION

What of his soloists? Alongside Rabin, Perlman, Accardo and Vengerov, **Hilary Hahn** (2005) offers the most rhythmically accurate and technically secure account. She produces the most beguiling tone throughout, no matter what the level of difficulty; but if you're after showmanship and edge-of-the-seat excitement, you must look elsewhere.

Nemanja Radulović (2013), for instance, plays with tremendous flamboyance, lingering with romantic ardour over the long-spun cantilena passages and bringing a gypsy-like swagger to the central 'recitative' section of the first movement. He is, though, a little too cavalier, playing fast and loose with agogics – not an easy man to accompany, one suspects. But Radulović is highly persuasive. He and Oue play everything to the hilt and convey the feeling that they are having a terrific time. In this full-bodied recording, the first-movement cadenza is by Nathan Milstein, adapted by Radulović.

Were it not for the sonic limitations, Menuhin and Monteux might just have won the 'palme d'or' – it is certainly the best account of the 1851 Schonberger score played in D major. I would never be without the Accardo and Dutoit set of all six Paganini concertos – an astonishing achievement by any standards. But if you want to hear every note of the amplified score, thrillingly realised with pinpoint precision in sumptuously engineered sound, then it has to be the partnership of Vengerov and Mehta. **G**



A portrait of Paganini by Sir Edwin Landseer (1802-73)



TOP CHOICE

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Maxim Vengerov and Mehta manage the near impossible in combining technical polish and showmanship with profound musicality and poise, serving Paganini's skill as composer and orchestrator at the very highest level, in exceptional sound quality – and at a bargain price.

G Visit the Gramophone Player at gramophone.co.uk to hear excerpts from this month's featured recordings

PERFORMANCES & EVENTS

There's a feast of music-making from around the world during September – live in the concert hall and opera house, on the radio and online, on television and in the cinema

EVENT OF THE MONTH



September

5

Minnesota, Minnesota Public Radio and online

The Minnesota Orchestra launches its 2014-15 season under newly reinstated Music Director Osmo Vänskä, following the resolution of a 15-month labour dispute between musicians and management. Soprano Renée Fleming is the featured soloist and performs her favourite opera arias and vocal selections. The programme also includes Wagner's Prelude to *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* and Respighi's *Pines of Rome*. The concert is broadcast regionally on Minnesota Public Radio and can also be accessed online via MPR's streaming service.

minnesotaorchestra.org

September

5&6

Cologne, WDR Radio and online

The WDR Sinfonieorchester Köln give two performances of Schubert's *Great Symphony* (No 9) conducted by Jukka-Pekka Saraste. Also on the programme is a new work by Wolfgang Rihm and Carl Reinecke's E minor Harp Concerto performed by the season's resident soloist Xavier de Maistre, who released the work on Claves in 2006. The programme is broadcast on German radio station WDR 3 and streamed online for international audiences.

wdr.de/radio/orchester/sinfonieorchester

September

5-30

San Francisco, KDFC radio and online

San Francisco Opera opens its 2014-15 season with a new production of Bellini's *Norma* starring Sondra Radvanovsky, who reprises her title-role after appearing with Metropolitan Opera last year. The cast, conducted by Music Director Nicola Luisotti, also includes Daveda Karanas as Adalgisa and Marco Berti as Pollione. Taking place at the War Memorial Opera House, the production is directed by Kevin Newbury, who made his San Francisco Opera debut directing the world premiere of *The Gospel of Mary Magdalene* in 2013, and is broadcast on KDFC radio throughout the San Francisco Bay area. Audiences can also listen online at kdfc.com and on demand after the initial broadcast.

September

10-28

Tokyo, NHK FM and NHK television

NHK Symphony Orchestra Honorary Conductor Herbert Blomstedt leads the orchestra in three Mozart and Tchaikovsky programmes throughout September at Suntory Hall. Up first on September 10 and 11 are Mozart's Symphony No 39 and Tchaikovsky's Symphony No 4. On September 19 and 20 the orchestra perform Mozart's Symphony No 40 and

September

3-12

Vienna, Opera for All and online

Vienna State Opera presents Wagner's *The Flying Dutchman*, starring Bryn Terfel in the title-role – following the bass-baritone's acclaimed performances for London's Royal Opera House, Zurich Opera and La Scala. Three stagings are conducted by Yannick Nézet-Séguin (September 3, 6 & 9) and one, on September 12, by Graeme Jenkins. Viennese audiences can watch the production via the company's free, open-air Opera for All screenings whereby each live performance is streamed on to an LED video wall erected in the Karajan-Platz outside the theatre. The staging on September 12 is also broadcast live online via the company's website, accessible to international viewers. wiener-staatsoper.at

Tchaikovsky's Fifth, and on September 27 and 28 Blomstedt conducts performances of Mozart's *Jupiter* (No 41) and Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique* Symphony (No 6). The concerts are broadcast live on NHK radio throughout Japan and will be shown on NHK television at a later date. nhkso.or.jp

September

12

Dublin, RTÉ Lyric FM and online

RTÉ National Symphony Principal Conductor Alan Buribayev launches the orchestra's 2014-15 season with Beethoven's *Leonore* Overture No 1. The evening also features Richard Strauss's *Ein Heldenleben*, the first of five of the composer's works performed throughout the season to mark his 150th anniversary. Acclaimed Finnish virtuoso Pekka Kuusisto joins the orchestra to perform Sibelius's Violin Concerto, too. The concert is broadcast on RTÉ Lyric FM throughout Ireland and is available to UK audiences via the station's online streaming service. rte.ie

September

12&13

Berlin and Digital Concert Hall

The 2013 Gramophone Award-winning team violinist Patricia Kopatchinskaja and conductor/composer Peter Eötvös join the Berlin Philharmonic to perform Eötvös's *DoReMi* Violin Concerto No 2



Patricia Kopatchinskaja plays Eötvös in Berlin

in celebration of the composer's 70th birthday. The programme also includes Wolfgang Rihm's *IN-SCHRIFT* 2, which was premiered in Berlin in October 2013 and groups the musicians in various locations around the auditorium. Arnold Schoenberg's orchestration of Brahms's Op 25 Piano Quartet rounds off the two concerts – the second of which is available internationally via the orchestra's Digital Concert Hall.

berliner-philharmoniker.de

London and BP Big Screens

Sept 12 London's Royal Opera House presents David McVicar's classic production of Verdi's *Rigoletto*, starring British baritone Simon Keenlyside in the title-role and Aleksandra Kurzak as Gilda. Maurizio Benini conducts nine of the ten performances, while Paul Wynne Griffiths takes up conducting duties for the final staging on October 6. On September 17 the opera house, in association with BP, broadcasts live outdoor relays to 14 big screens around the UK – from Trafalgar Square in London to Donegall Square in Belfast. Last year's BP Big Screening of *Tosca* attracted audiences of 27,000.

roh.org.uk

London, BBC Radio 3, BBC1 & BBC2 television and online

September 13 Sakari Oramo directs the BBC Singers, Symphony Chorus and Symphony Orchestra in his first Last Night of the Proms in London's Royal Albert Hall, joined by Dutch violinist Janine Jansen, who performs Chausson's *Poème* and Ravel's *Tzigane*. The concert, which also pays tribute to the late Sir John Tavener with his *Song for Athene*, marks the first performance in a new choral version of Sir Malcolm Arnold's *Peterloo Overture*

PHOTOGRAPHY: MICHAEL POERN/WIENER STAATSOPERA, MARCO BORGGREVE

with lyrics by Sir Tim Rice, and continues the Strauss anniversary celebrations with the Proms premiere of the composer's cantata *Taillefer*. Baritone Roderick Williams leads the traditional Last Night favourites in the patriotic second half. The performance is broadcast live UK-wide on BBC Radio 3, BBC television and online via the Proms website and iPlayer.

bbc.co.uk/proms

September
15

London and BBC Radio 3

French-Canadian pianist Marc-André Hamelin gives a recital at London's Wigmore Hall as part of BBC Radio 3's Monday Lunchtime Concerts series – broadcast live throughout the UK. On the programme are Schubert's Four Impromptus, D935 and the UK premiere of Godowsky's Study No 44 after Chopin's *Nouvelle Etude* No 1 in a completion by Hamelin. The pianist also performs four of Godowsky's fiendishly difficult *Studies after Chopin for the Left Hand Alone*. wigmore-hall.org.uk

September
18

Cinema Live UK & Ireland

In March, Handa Opera and Opera Australia staged a spectacular production of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* on Sydney Harbour. It was the third opera to appear on a tailor-made stage suspended over the water. The outdoor spectacle included a giant sun and moon which rose to hang above the stage where Japanese soprano Hiromi Omura portrayed Cio-Cio San with co-star Georgy Vasiliev as Pinkerton. The recorded production is broadcast in cinemas worldwide during September: on one night in the UK and Ireland; dates to be confirmed for other parts of the world. cinemalive.com

September
18

Toronto

The Toronto Symphony Orchestra opens its 2014-15 season in Roy Thomson Hall with Berlioz's *Roman Carnival* overture and Rimsky-Korsakov's *Capriccio espagnol* performed under the baton of Music Director Peter Oundjian. Star of the programme is violin soloist Joshua Bell, who plays Lalo's fiery *Symphonie espagnole*. tso.ca

September
19

Paris, Radio France and online

The Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, conducted by Music Director Myung-Whun Chung, performs Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique*

Symphony and Rachmaninov's Second Piano Concerto at Paris's Salle Pleyel. The featured soloist is Evgeny Kissin, who recorded the concerto with the London Symphony Orchestra in 1993 for RCA Red Seal. The performance is broadcast on Radio France, and is also available for online streaming via the station's website. sallepleyel.fr

Sept 24
Oct 18

New York and Met Live in HD

Metropolitan Opera opens its 2014-15 season of 26 operas with Adrian Noble's chilling production of Verdi's *Macbeth*. Leading a star cast is Anna Netrebko as the murderous Lady Macbeth. Also appearing on the New York stage are Željko Lučić in the title-role, Joseph Calleja as Macduff and René Pape as Banquo. The Met's Principal Conductor Fabio Luisi leads seven performances. On October 11, the production is broadcast live to cinemas around the world as part of the Met's new Live in HD season of 10 productions. metopera.org

September
26

WFMT radio and web

As part of a longstanding media partnership, WFMT radio broadcasts the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in Mahler's First Symphony and Schubert's Symphony No 5. Three live concerts, recorded for radio and conducted by Music Director Riccardo Muti at Chicago's Symphony Center, took place on June 19, 20 and 21 this year. Hosted by Lisa Simeone, the two-hour radio broadcast also includes deeper insights into the music, and interviews with CSO musicians and guest artists. The broadcast is available internationally via the radio station's online streaming service. wfmt.com

September
27

Boston, WGBH radio and online

Andris Nelsons celebrates the start of his tenure as Boston Symphony Orchestra Music Director with a one-night-only special event featuring his wife, the soprano Kristine Opolais, and tenor Jonas Kaufmann. The programme includes repertoire from Wagner, Mascagni, Catalani and Puccini operas in addition to Wagner's *Tannhäuser* Overture – the work that first inspired Nelsons's love of music at the age of five – and Respighi's *The Pines of Rome*. The performance is broadcast live on WGBH and is made available through the BSO Media Center the week after the programme's premiere at Symphony Hall. bsomedia.org



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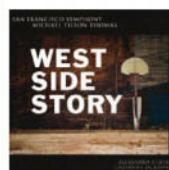
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THIS MONTH I test a high-end amplifier from an unexpected source and consider the race for multiroom honours.

Andrew Everard,
Audio Editor

SEPTEMBER TEST DISCS



Even better in the 24-bit/96kHz format in which it was recorded, the San Francisco Symphony's *West Side Story* is a compelling listen.



This recital of Lieder by Mr & Mrs Mahler sung by Karen Cargill on Linn is a spine-tingling combination of performance and recording quality.

Wireless audio, network hi-fi and more...

The latest arrivals on the market develop the flexibility of the modern audio system



Everyone, it seems, is jumping on the wireless audio bandwagon, whether it's with standalone Bluetooth speakers designed to work with smartphones and tablet computers, or complete multiroom music set-ups. As I discuss later in this section, the race is truly on to catch up with multiroom wireless market leader Sonos and stake a claim in this new home-audio territory, but there are also slightly less wide-ranging systems joining the fray.

Loudspeaker manufacturer Dynaudio **1** has boosted its Xeo wireless speaker offering with new models, upgraded wireless working and devices to extend the range of a cable-free system. The new standmount Xeo 4 and floorstanding Xeo 6 loudspeakers, selling for £1550 a pair and £2700/pr respectively, also have a Speaker Position EQ switch for more flexible placement, optimising them for use in free space, near a corner or close to a back wall.

In addition, joining the £225 Xeo Hub, which offers analogue or digital inputs – the latter at up to 24-bit/96kHz – for wireless transmission to the speakers, are the Xeo Extender and Xeo Link, at £135 each. The former receives and retransmits the wireless audio signal to extend the range, while the latter connects to the wireless system and offers digital and

analogue outputs to feed a conventional amplifier, AV receiver or system.

Marantz **2** has long had a strong presence in the UPnP streaming field, working on an existing home network, with a range of compact systems and both midrange and high-end network audio players. Now it's launched the NA8005 player, selling for £999 and offering DSD2.8 and 5.6 audio decoding both from a computer via its asynchronous USB input, with extended isolation to remove computer noise, and over a network. Apple AirPlay connectivity and Spotify Connect streaming join internet radio capability; and, as well as streaming a wide range of content from local storage over a home network, and that computer USB input, the Marantz can also work in DAC mode, having both optical and electrical digital inputs. It's part of an extended range of Marantz and Denon products designed for computer-based hi-fi and desktop audio applications, with new models due to be launched over the coming months.

Back to desktop audio, and products with Bluetooth, asynchronous USB and DSD capability, and TEAC **3** has launched a new Reference 301 system comprising an amplifier with built-in Bluetooth and USB DAC, a dual-mono separate converter and a pair of speakers with coaxial drive units.

The £399 AI-301DA amplifier is a compact 21.5cm wide, offers 2x40W output, has aptX Bluetooth and an asynchronous USB input, and is compatible with file formats up to 32-bit/192kHz as well as DSD2.8/5.6. Automatic power-up will switch the system on when it senses an incoming digital signal, and a Coupling Capacitor-less Circuit design optimises headphone performance.

At the same width and price as the amplifier, the UD-301 offers similar file-format handling, can upscale lesser signals to 192kHz and has a dual-mono construction for optimal signal separation. Completing the system are the £299/pr LS-301 speakers, which have their tweeters placed in front of their woofers for better stereo imaging and cohesion.

We started this month with a Danish speaker company, and so we finish, with revised high-end speakers from Gamut **4**: the RS series replaces the S range, with models starting from £11,850 for the standmount RS3 and going all the way up to the flagship RS9 at £74,000. The new models retain the inner structure of multilayered Finnish birch ply but now have a five-layer laminate outer skin of 2mm ash veneers, further reducing resonance, new drivers throughout including 18cm sliced-cone bass units, and Gamut's own 'Wormhole Signature' internal cabling. **6**

● REVIEW PRODUCT OF THE MONTH

Cambridge Audio Azur 851E and 851W

Mighty preamplifier and power amplifier fly in the face of fashion to good effect

The audio industry is as prone to fashion as any other. A few companies launch standalone DACs with computer inputs, and before you know it everyone is offering them; and right now we're seeing an explosion of multiroom audio systems on the coat-tails of the massive success of Sonos. At the same time CD player sales are falling, with many choosing to use their Blu-ray players or computers to handle discs, or even ripping those CDs to hard disk and playing them that way. There's also been a decline in sales of those big behemoth AV receivers, as well as conventional stereo amplifiers.

However, the current thinking seems to be that if you are buying a new amplifier, it needs to offer digital inputs alongside the usual analogue ones – an area in which stereo amplifiers are taking a leaf out of the AV receiver design book – or even better provide asynchronous USB inputs for a computer hook-up, standard USB for memory devices or full streaming facilities with Wi-Fi. After all, the fashion thinking goes, if you can get all this on an AV receiver for £500 or so, or a complete micro-system for about the same amount, shouldn't you expect it on an amplifier only capable of stereo? And if you can cram all that, a CD player and a radio tuner into a micro-sized box not much more than half the width of a standard hi-fi component, why does a simple amplifier have to be so big?

High-end companies protest that simple is best, and that the ideal is nothing more than some inputs, a source selector, a volume control and power amplifier sections (preferably all built with the minimum of components), while internet forum ranters



CAMBRIDGE AUDIO AZUR 851E

Type Preamplifier

Price £1200

Inputs Three sets balanced on XLRs, four sets RCA phono, tape in on RCA phono

Outputs Balanced on XLRs, unbalanced on RCA phono, subwoofer out with switchable low-pass filter, headphones

Other connections Trigger in/out, external IR, RS232, Cambridge Control Bus

Tone controls Yes, assignable to each input

AV bypass/unity gain Yes, plus trim on each input

Accessories supplied Remote handset

Finishes available Black, silver

Dimensions (WxHxD) 43x11.5x38.5cm



CAMBRIDGE AUDIO AZUR 851W

Type Stereo power amplifier

Price £1500

Inputs XLR balanced, RCA phono

Outputs Two sets combination speaker terminals per channel, RCA phono and XLR loop-throughs for daisychaining amplifiers

Power output 200W per channel into 8 ohms, 350W into 4 ohms; or 500W into 8 ohms, 800W into 4 ohms when bridged into mono

Input options Stereo, bridged, twin mono (for biampification)

Other connections Cambridge Audio Control Bus, 12V trigger, external IR

Finishes available Black, silver

Dimensions (WxHxD) 43x14.8x36.5cm

cambridgeaudio.com

carp, 'It costs how much? And it doesn't even have a USB input?' – or Wi-Fi, or Bluetooth, or DLNA streaming... The fact is, the miniaturisation of various functions on a single 'chip', or set of chips, makes it easy to incorporate such options into modestly priced products: you can buy a Bluetooth speaker, with amplification and rechargeable battery power, for well under £100 today.

The difficult bit is avoiding the easy solutions – amp on a chip, generic digital volume control and so on – in the quest for better performance, but that's just what these Cambridge Audio products have done as part

of a larger exercise in flying in the face of just about every audio fashion of the moment. Not only are the Azur 851E and 851W resolutely non-digital, they're also built from scratch with proprietary Cambridge Audio technology, and although together they make up 'just a stereo amplifier', they come in two separate boxes, each pretty substantial.

Yes, there's a separate preamplifier and a stereo power amplifier (19.1kg) capable of 2x200W as well as being bridgeable to create an even hunkier mono amplifier (500W).

As with other Cambridge Audio products, the 851 models are built around basic

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PMC TWENTY.26

The latest in PMC's acclaimed twenty series, the twenty.26 is a clear, crisp but forceful three-way floorstander that's perfect for these Cambridge Audio amps.



modules and technologies developed in-house by the company's team of engineers; and they're made in China under close supervision from the UK-based designers and engineers.

While the 851E is an all-analogue design – even volume and balance are adjusted in the analogue domain, albeit under digital control – it still offers a wide range of convenience features. There are shelf-type volume controls, offering a maximum 10dB of boost or cut at 10Hz in the case of the bass control, or +/-7.5dB at 20kHz on the treble, with a 'direct' button to bypass them for the cleanest possible signal path, and the ability to set them as active or inactive for each input. Individual trims can also be set for each input, allowing levels to be balanced, and there's also a fixed-level option on each input, for example for use when combining the preamp with an AV receiver or processor.

The 851E has three stereo inputs on a choice of balanced XLRs or conventional RCA phono inputs, another four sets of RCA phono inputs and a record in/out loop, with outputs on both balanced XLRs and phonos. There's also a separate subwoofer output, able to deliver either a full-range signal or through a 200Hz low-pass filter. At the heart of the preamp are Cambridge Audio's Terrapin impedance buffering modules (used in place of the more common op-amps), a hefty toroidal transformer and a well-damped metal chassis.

The 851W power amp also uses those Terrapin modules, and Cambridge Audio's Class XD working – another proprietary design element. Combining the power delivery of Class AB and the purity of Class A, the amp effectively works in both modes at once, adjusting the switching point between the two according to the output level.

PERFORMANCE

Set-up and connection are simple. The two units have multiple remote control connections, so the power amp can be set to power up from standby with the preamp, and the 851W has substantial speaker terminals. After experimenting, I settled on balanced connections between the two, with the main source component being the Naim NDS/555PS and the principal speakers the PMC OB1s (I also tried the B&W 684 S2s to good effect as a more affordable option).

The idea of 'getting out of the way of the music' isn't a new one but that's just what the 851E/W pairing manages, delivering a sound with a transparency and immediacy unusual at any price, and quite remarkable in what are, after all, just the foothills of audio's high end. Playing the recently released San Francisco Symphony/MTT *West Side Story* proved a fine way to demonstrate the twin virtues of the Cambridge Audio amplification: massive power to handle the dynamic swings, and solid control of the speakers ensuring crisp clarity along with a sweet, naturally fluid presentation. Load up a set like this and it's hard not to be swept along by the drama of the piece and the sheer quality of the performances, especially audible in this 24-bit/96kHz download, a bargain for around £10 from HDtracks.

But it's not just with large-scale works that the Cambridge Audio pairing can work its magic. The recent Ensemble Marsyas recording of works by Fasch, in a beautifully recorded 24/192 download from Linn Records, shows how it combines with a top-notch network player to deliver all the intricacy and interior detail of these chamber works, making the discovery of these unfamiliar pieces doubly rewarding. The Cambridge Audio amplifiers have excellent weight and body, and play music with real conviction, but above all the old 'iron fist in a velvet glove' thing really ensures their appeal, giving excellent speed and definition to the music, and letting rhythms and instrumental techniques sing out.

Talking of singing out, this amplification sounds lovely with another recent Linn release – Karen Cargill's recital of Lieder by Alma and Gustav Mahler. It delivers her voice with beautiful open-mouthed clarity and conveys the recording's skilful balance between singer and accompanist, while enabling the recorded acoustic to add to a striking sense of the performance being in the listening room.

In summary, this is one of the most impressive and convincing amplifier combinations I have heard for a very long time, and one well worth seeking out and auditioning. Like me, and like the Cambridge Audio engineers, you may find that flying in the face of fashion has its advantages. **G**

Or you could try...

The Cambridge Audio combination sets the standard at its price, being easily the equal of some preamp/power amplifier combinations from some of the more immediately apparent audio companies. Where it differs is that this is Cambridge Audio's flagship amplification system, whereas its rivals are nearer the entry point for their manufacturer's ranges.

Rotel RA-1570



If you want an amplifier with plenty of power, plus the fashionable digital inputs the 851E lacks, and all in one box, you could do a lot worse than the Rotel RA-1570. Selling for £1200, it delivers 120W per channel, and has both a front-panel USB input for digital media and an asynchronous USB to the rear to which computer audio output can be connected. There's even a USB Bluetooth 'dongle' included, allowing the Rotel amp to receive music wirelessly from suitable portable devices and computers.

Arcam A49



If you want that one-box amplifier convenience and plenty of power, the new Arcam A49, at around £3500, could well fit the bill. Built on a massive chassis, with fully balanced operation, this hefty amplifier delivers 200W per channel into an 8 ohm load, doubling to 2x400W into 4 ohms; it's designed to drive and control any speakers you happen to throw at it. Designed in the UK and built in the USA, the A49 is designed to deliver the first 50W of its output in Class A, then draw on the extra power reserves of its Class G amplifier topology. It even has a built-in power supply for Arcam's offboard DACs and Bluetooth devices.

● REVIEW SCHIIT AUDIO MODI & MAGNI

Ultra-compact DAC and amp

Miniature digital-to-analogue converter and headphone amplifier make a fine desktop audio combination

As hi-fi has moved increasingly into the computer world, a whole new sector of hi-fi components has grown up under the 'desktop audio' banner. Depending on your lifestyle, this may be your main system or a secondary set-up, and there's no shortage of desktop-suitable equipment, with even the bigger names in hi-fi adding such models to their ranges and many new names springing up to feed this demand. One such is California-based Schiit Audio – yes, the name was chosen to attract attention! – which was put together by two entrepreneurs with extensive industry experience: Jason Stoddard used to be engineering lead at Sumo, while co-founder Mike Moffat was the founder of Theta and Angstrom.

'The instruction manual has some good jokes to fill the space left by the lack of complex instructions'

With a stack of famous high-end heavyweight products behind them, what did the two decide to build? In the main, ultra-compact hi-fi units, designed to sell at very competitive prices, and with names drawing on Norse mythology. The initial products were two headphone amplifiers, the \$249 Asgard and \$349 Valhalla. Both are still available, now in MkII versions, at the same prices, and like the originals are sold factory-direct in the USA and via distributors in other countries.

In the five years since it was founded, Schiit Audio has expanded its product range, and the models we have here are some of the most recent arrivals. The Modi digital-to-analogue converter was launched along with the Magni headphone amplifier at the beginning of 2013, and they have recently been joined by an add-on DSD-only converter, the Loki, designed to be used with the Modi, or indeed any other DAC, to add DSD conversion capability. Modi and Magni sell for \$99 apiece direct from the factory in the States, and £99 apiece via the UK distributor, Electromod, thanks to taxes and margins, while the Loki is \$149/£149.

That pricing is all the more remarkable when you consider that Schiit makes its products not in China but in the USA: as the company says, 'Our board house is 20 minutes away from our office, and our chassis guys are just over the hill in the Valley'. Components are also US-sourced wherever possible, while 'innovative engineering has allowed [us] to keep the overall prices of [our] products similar to those from Chinese companies manufacturing in China'.

PERFORMANCE

Both the Modi and the Magni are housed in little folded metal boxes, finished in silver and standing just over 3cm tall and a little under 13cm wide. The Modi is powered via the asynchronous USB connection from a computer, its only input, and has nothing more than a pair of analogue outputs and a white light on the front to show it's connected to an active USB output. It needs no drivers to work with Windows, Mac or Linux computers, and is good for files of up to 24-bit/96kHz. An alternative version is available with an optical input and handling files up to 24-bit/192kHz.

The Magni, meanwhile, is hardly more complex. Powered from a plug-top mains adapter supplied, it has a pair of analogue inputs and a power switch to the rear, and a white indicator lamp, volume control and 6.3mm stereo headphone socket on the front panel.

A clear and brief instruction manual comes with both units, and has some good jokes to fill the space left by the lack of complex instructions. Setting up and using these components really is that simple: stick-on feet are supplied to stack them and stop them sliding about, and I found they fitted perfectly between the base and screen of my computer display.

Small they may be but these components have a big, richly detailed sound, whether used separately or together. I used the Modi straight into my main system, as well as via the Magni into the excellent Oppo PM-1 headphones, and in both cases what was striking was the honesty of the sound, and the definition and bass weight on offer. True, you could get even more from components costing several times as much;



SPECIFICATION

SCHIIT AUDIO MODI

Type USB DAC

Price £99

Input Asynchronous USB Type B (for signal and power)

Maximum bit-depth/sampling rate

24-bit/96kHz

Output RCA phono

Dimensions (WxHxD) 12.7x3.2x8.9cm

SCHIIT AUDIO MAGNI

Type Headphone amplifier

Price £99

Inputs RCA phono

Output 6.3mm stereo

Maximum power 1.2W into 32 ohms

Accessories supplied Plug-top power supply

Dimensions (WxHxD) 12.7x3.2x8.9cm
electromod.co.uk

but, listening to everything from decent-bitrate internet radio to high-resolution audio downloads, it's impossible not to admire what these two little boxes do for just £99 apiece.

What's more, used with some good headphones – and you needn't go to the four-figure price of the Oppos – the Modi and Magni make a strong case for the whole desktop/headphones listening thing. I tried them with both the B&W P3 and Bang & Olufsen H6, as well as with the Oppo PM-1s, and enjoyed the whole experience immensely. The Magni will drive as hard as anyone could ever want while staying clean, clear and entirely in control, while the Modi really digs out the information from a huge range of recordings.

These Schiit Audio products are simple, effective and highly affordable, and I can see no reason not to recommend them without reservation. **G**

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ESSAY

Multiroom audio: can anyone catch Sonos?

Hi-fi's major names have stopped standing in awe of the Sonos success story and are starting to compete – but are their efforts a case of too little, too late?



The Sonos story is a remarkable one by any standards. Founded in 2002 by John McFarlane, whose previous business had been email server software in the early days of companies using such systems, it has grown very rapidly into a major force in the audio industry. Established in Santa Barbara, California, where it is still headquartered, it also has offices on the US East Coast, where its main technical centre is located, and in China, Malaysia and the Netherlands. It announced earlier this year that its 2013 revenues were nearly double those of the previous year, at \$535m (around £315m).

Over the years the Sonos offering has changed, moving on from its original wireless ZonePlayer devices (one with an amplifier for 'just add speakers' audio, the other designed to connect to existing systems) to all-in-one wireless active speaker systems to deliver sound in any room, and all but replacing the original system controller with free apps for iOS and Android, able to drive a complete system. It has also taken on streaming services such as Spotify, adding this to its original idea of streaming a user's own collection plus internet radio, and streamlined the way buyers can start to set up its systems to the point where they're now a masterclass in simplicity and glitch-free installation. In fact, the company refers to 'Time to Music' – how long it takes to get a system up and running – and is insistent on keeping this down below 10 minutes. In fact, when new features are suggested for the system, they first have to pass the test of how many seconds they would add to the 'Time to Music'.

What's more, Sonos speakers, from the basic Play:1 up to the 'stereo in a box'

The HEOS range by Denon is playing catch-up

Play:5, can be used separately or in pairs – to give stereo in the case of the Play:1 and Play:3, or just bigger stereo with the Play:5 – while the arrival of the Playbar allows users to combine the twin functions of improving the sound from a TV set and streaming music. Oh, and you can add a wireless subwoofer and a pair of the Play:1 or Play:3 speakers to the Playbar to create a complete 5.1-channel surround system, wirelessly.

'These newcomers need to establish themselves as a matter of some urgency if they're not to cede to Sonos'

What hasn't changed is the basic premise of Sonos: music in every room of the home, distributed over a dedicated 'mesh' network, so your audio isn't sharing bandwidth with your internet browsing. Clearly the Sonos concept is working a treat, to the extent that it's almost the de facto standard for wireless multiroom audio systems worldwide. Now, however, established companies seem be launching similar systems left, right and centre, and new companies are springing up with their own multiroom systems.

Already Panasonic and Samsung have their own systems, Denon has just launched

its own HEOS system and there are recent or new companies such as Simple Audio and Musaic entering the fray. All of which prompts a couple of questions: what took them so long, and do they stand any chance of catching up with Sonos?

The former is perhaps explained by big-company caution about the viability of such systems, rapidly giving way to something slightly akin to panic when Sonos sales really started to explode, not to mention the availability of turnkey solutions such as Qualcomm's AllPlay smart media platform, used in the Panasonic ALL system, and the MaxxAudio suite used in Denon's HEOS. There's also the fact that most of the new arrivals are able to work on an existing Wi-Fi network, rather than having the 'mesh' system of Sonos, again simplifying things. The answer to the latter is that these newcomers really do need to establish themselves in the market as a matter of some urgency if they're not to cede the entire multiroom sector to Sonos (as arguably they have to date).

That was made clear at a recent presentation given by Denon and Marantz parent D+M Group, which as an entire operation is about the same size, in financial terms at least, as Sonos (and was founded as a group in the same year Sonos was established). What emerged was the 'so simple it's obvious when you think about it' point that once a consumer buys into a particular wireless multiroom 'eco-system' – there was a lot of such terminology in the presentation – they tend to stay with it. Unlike conventional hi-fi, where you can use a player from brand A with an amplifier from brand B and speakers from brand Y, these multiroom systems are closed: Sonos products will only work with other Sonos products, HEOS speakers with other HEOS speakers and so on. That applies even when the systems are using standard Wi-Fi as their means of transmission.

So, lock a consumer in to your system and you can reap the future benefits of further buys as the consumer expands their set-up – or, as D+M CEO Jim Caudill puts it, 'For every home we can convert to our technology platform, it gives us an annuity stream'. Well, it seems to have worked for Sonos... **G**

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NOTES & LETTERS

Prokofiev quoting Wagner · Schoenberg's serial uncertainty · To plug or not to plug?

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Pizzetti at the opera

I was surprised to read, in Caroline Gill's review of Pizzetti and Castelnuovo-Tedesco violin sonatas (July, page 52), that Pizzetti 'was never involved in opera'. Karajan would have been surprised, too, since he performed and recorded Pizzetti's operatic masterpiece *Assassinio nella cattedrale*.

Stephen Reisbach, via email

By my count, Pizzetti wrote 15 complete operas. As well as *Assassinio nella cattedrale*, which was premiered at La Scala, *Fedra*, *Fra Gherardo* and *La figlia di Iorio* have been occasionally performed and recorded, and *Fra Gherardo* was produced at the Met during the Gatti-Casazza era.

Henry Fogel, via email

Russian quotations

Regarding quotations in music (Letters, July), has anyone else noticed that

Prokofiev, in the second movement of his Sixth Symphony, quotes the second half of the motif of the sacred supper from Wagner's *Parsifal*, and that Shostakovich, in the finale of his Symphony No 13, quotes the chorus 'Let him be crucified' from Bach's *St Matthew Passion*?

Chris Burmajster, via email

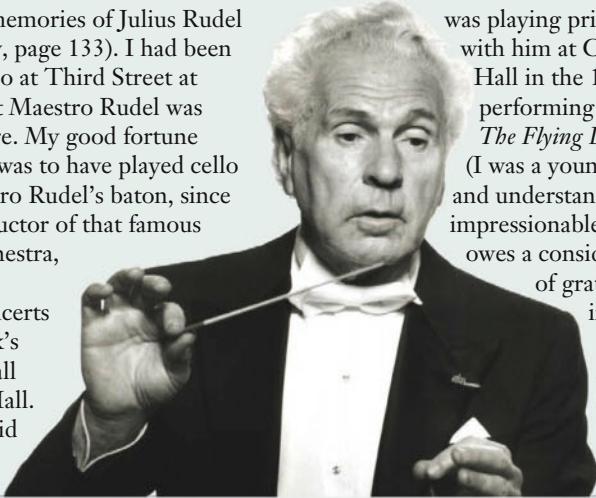
Schoenberg's symphony?

Philip Clark states that at the start of the First World War Schoenberg was writing 'a new 12-note symphony' ('Impressions of War', July). He did sketch a 12-note

Letter of the Month

Remembering Rudel

I have rich memories of Julius Rudel (see obituary, page 133). I had been studying cello at Third Street at the time that Maestro Rudel was director there. My good fortune and honour was to have played cello under Maestro Rudel's baton, since he was conductor of that famous school's orchestra, which gave frequent concerts in New York's Carnegie Hall and Town Hall. My most vivid memory



was playing principal cello with him at Carnegie Hall in the 1950s, performing Wagner's *The Flying Dutchman* (I was a young teenager and understandably quite impressionable). The world owes a considerable debt of gratitude to this influential artist.

Leon J Hoffman
Chicago,
USA

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theme for a choral symphony but his 12-note technique wasn't developed until nearly a decade later. Clark also suggests that Schoenberg's 1923 Serenade was his 'first fully fledged serial work' but only the fourth movement is serial.

Stephen Barber
Carterton, Oxon, UK

Philip Clark writes: I had meant to write that the Serenade 'contained' Schoenberg's first fully fledged serial work but between drafts the meaning got garbled. But when I said Schoenberg was working on a '12-tone symphony' I meant in the sense of using all 12 tones freely, as opposed to his serial technique, which indeed came later.

Plugging Prokofiev

In the picture of Steven Osborne recording the Prokofiev violin sonatas with Alina Ibragimova (Recording of the Month, August, page 29), it seems that he is either putting ear pieces in or taking them out. Why? The violinist is barely 10ft away.

Cliff Millward
Tipton, W Midlands, UK

Emma Sweetland, Osborne's agent, writes: Steven started wearing earplugs as a protective measure some years ago after developing early signs of tinnitus but soon discovered other benefits when moving between pianos and differing acoustics. He also feels it helps him get 'deeper into the keys' and more in touch with his 'idealised sense of music'.



Tuning in: an earplugged Steven Osborne

OBITUARIES

Two conductors who led major New York musical institutions: the NYPO's Lorin Maazel and City Opera's Julius Rudel; plus Capilla Flamenca's Artistic Director Dirk Snellings and LSO Principal Trumpet Rod Franks



LORIN MAAZEL

Conductor and composer

Born March 6, 1930

Died July 13, 2014

The American conductor Lorin Maazel has died, aged 84, from complications due to pneumonia. A child prodigy – he first conducted at the age of nine – Maazel went on to become one of the leading conductors of our time. Among his many posts, he was Music Director of the New York Philharmonic (2002-09), of the Bavarian RSO (1993-2002) and of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra (1988-96); he also held positions at Vienna State Opera (1982-84), Orchestre Nationale de France (1977-91), Cleveland Orchestra (1972-82) and Deutsche Oper Berlin (1965-71). (When, following Karajan's death in 1989, he was passed over in favour of Claudio Abbado as the Berlin Philharmonic's Principal Conductor, he took umbrage and never conducted the orchestra again.) At the time of his death he was Music Director of the Munich Philharmonic. He died at his home in Virginia, where he was preparing for this year's Castleton Festival.

A second-generation American (of Dutch and Russian origin), Maazel was born in Paris and started his musical life as a violinist, beginning lessons at the age of five and conducting lessons two years later. At the age of 11, he had already shared the podium with Leopold Stokowski, and Toscanini helped secure him conducting engagements, including letting him conduct his NBC Symphony

in July 1941. (Apparently, when the assured young maestro found himself in front of one of the US's more hard-bitten orchestras, he asked 'Gentlemen, what shall we play?' and a voice from the back was heard to reply: 'Cops and robbers!')

He studied languages (he spoke six fluently), mathematics and philosophy at the University of Pittsburgh and in 1951 travelled to Europe on a Fulbright scholarship, encouraged by the conductor Victor de Sabata. He made his European conducting debut in 1953 at Catania in Italy. In 1960 he was both the first American and the first Jewish conductor to appear at the Bayreuth Festival, returning in 1968 and '69 to conduct complete *Ring* cycles.

He enjoyed responding to challenges: one of the most daunting was performing all nine of Beethoven's symphonies in a single day, a feat he undertook twice, once at London's Royal Festival Hall in 1988 with three different orchestras. For most engagements, his fee was astronomical and he wasn't afraid to undertake projects his colleagues would have cavilled at: conducting (for record) Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Requiem*, for example. He also conducted for opera on film: Joseph Losey's *Don Giovanni*, Francesco Rossi's *Carmen* and Franco Zeffirelli's *Otello*.

Maazel was an accomplished violinist and played briefly in the Pittsburgh SO; he maintained a high standard throughout his life, sometimes performing his own violin concerto, *Music for Violin* (1997 – a work he also recorded for RCA).

His technical facility on the podium was legendary and, as the possessor of a photographic memory, he rarely used a score in a career that embraced 7000 concert and opera performances. He was a difficult conductor to characterise: he could control a vast score with ease; he could appear cold and detached and then on another occasion deliver a performance of colossal intensity; and he could sometimes be almost perversely wilful: a recent Strauss *Alpine Symphony* with the Philharmonia was slower than the norm by nearly 10 minutes yet the control was supreme and often utterly convincing.

Maazel's recordings nearly always divided critics but his early discs for DG with the Berlin RSO were almost unanimously praised and still astound for their technical finesse and excitement. Recordings of Falla's *El Amor brujo* with Grace Bumbry and Stravinsky's *Firebird* Suite confirm Maazel's youthful talent. A (reissued) recording of Ravel's *L'enfant et les sortilèges* with the Orchestre National de France took a *Gramophone* Award for Best Remastered CD in 1989.

During the 1960s and '70s he made a number of opera sets for Decca including two with Birgit Nilsson – Puccini's *Tosca* and Beethoven's *Fidelio*. He also made a groundbreaking recording of Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess* in Cleveland for Decca with Willard White and Leona Mitchell in the title-roles.

Among his many symphonic projects is a still much-admired Sibelius cycle with the VPO for Decca. He recorded the Beethoven symphonies with the Cleveland Orchestra for CBS and made two cycles of the Mahler symphonies. BR-Klassik released a set of the complete Bruckner symphonies with the BRSO, recorded live over a three-month period in early 1999. He also recorded the complete Schubert symphonies with the BRSO in 2001 (BR-Klassik) following a nearly complete cycle with the Berlin Philharmonic in the early 1960s. He led 11 New Year's Day concerts, many of them recorded by DG.

As a composer, Maazel's output includes the opera *1984*, based on Orwell's novel, which was produced at Covent Garden in May 2005 (available on DVD from DG), as well as *concertante* works written for Rostropovich and James Galway. He was a fine tennis player, an accomplished chess player and a film director. **James Jolly**

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JULIUS RUDEL

*Conductor and administrator**Born March 6, 1921**Died June 26, 2014*

Julius Rudel, the guiding spirit of New York City Opera from 1944 to 1979, has died; he was 93. Born in Vienna, where he later studied at the Academy of Music,

Rudel left Austria after the *Anschluss* with his brother and travelled to the USA. He studied conducting at the Mannes College of Music in New York, during which time he supported his brother by working as a stock clerk, delivery boy and switchboard operator.

After graduation he joined New York City Opera as a rehearsal pianist and by 1957 was Principal Conductor and General Manager. His imaginative programming and eye for up-and-coming singers put the company on the musical map and, in 1966, he oversaw the move to the New York State Theater (now David H Koch Theater) at Lincoln Center. The first production there – Ginastera's *Don Rodrigo* – saw among its cast an unknown tenor called Plácido Domingo. Rudel programmed many American operas including Marc Blitzstein's *Regina*, Leonard Bernstein's *Trouble in Tahiti* and Jack Beeson's *Lizzie Borden*.

On record he recorded for Westminster, RCA and EMI, and opera projects on disc include frequent collaborations with Beverly Sills, the leading soprano with New York City Opera. **James Jolly**

DIRK SNELLINGS

*Bass and musicologist**Born April 5, 1959**Died July 15, 2014*

Dirk Snellings, the founder and Artistic Director of Capilla Flamenca, has died at the age of 55. Snellings was the bass singer of the quartet that lies at the heart of the Flemish vocal ensemble – an ensemble specialising in music of the 15th and 16th centuries.

Snellings graduated with a First Prize in voice from the Antwerp Conservatory and, in addition to his duties with Capilla Flamenca, sang as a soloist with many ensembles including La Petite Bande and Il Fondamento. He also taught voice and early music history at the Lemmens Institute in Leuven, Belgium.

Snellings specialised in searching for vocal techniques appropriate to each

stylistic age – particularly in polyphonic music from the Renaissance and Baroque periods. His recording of Agricola's Mass for Ricercar was shortlisted for a *Gramophone* Award in the Early Music category in 2011.

Jérôme Lejeune, Artistic Director of Ricercar, paid tribute to the bass singer and musicologist: '[Like] Johannes Ockeghem, whose bass voice was described as 'Vox Aurea' – 'the golden voice' – [so] Dirk Snellings had a voice that was recognisable by all...A tireless researcher, he created, with his Capilla Flamenca, the ideal instrument to promote the rich repertoire of Franco-Flemish composers.' **Sarah Kirkup**

ROD FRANKS

*Trumpeter**Born May 15, 1956**Died July 20, 2014*

LSO trumpeter Rod Franks has died following a car accident in Nottinghamshire.

Franks was born in Yorkshire in 1956 and studied trumpet with Maurice Murphy. In 1977 he became principal trumpet of the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra, where he remained for seven years. He took up the post of principal trumpet of the LSO in 1990, two years after joining the orchestra. Franks remained the LSO's principal for 25 years but had recently requested to take up the No 3 chair.

In 2003 Franks released a recital disc called 'Saving Face' which demonstrated the breadth of his repertoire, from Handel to Thelonious Monk. Jonathan Freeman-Attwood reviewed the disc for *Gramophone* in October 2003, writing: 'This programme [was] assembled as a result of his extraordinary recovery from a brain tumour and resulting facial palsy. No sooner had he convalesced than Rod Franks was harnessed to his practice chair and back in business within months. Without such an illness, this CD (all donations to Guy's and the LSO Benevolent Fund) might not exist to exhibit the solo credentials of a great orchestral trumpeter.'

In an official statement, the LSO said: 'This is a very sad day...and Rod will be missed hugely for his ever-welcoming friendliness and brilliant playing.'

James McCarthy

To read these obituaries in full, visit gramophone.co.uk/news; a two-page tribute to tenor Carlo Bergonzi will appear in the Awards issue of Gramophone

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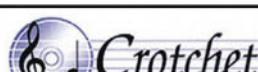
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Jilly Cooper

The writer of the racing set has always loved music, and her novel *Appassionata* features a voluptuous violinist and an evil conductor...

My father played the violin beautifully, and he also played the piano. My mother played the piano a bit so we had a lot of singing around the piano. I was taken constantly to the Winter Gardens as we lived near Ilkley. Amazing musicians like Denis Matthews, Clifford Curzon and Myra Hess would come and it was heavenly.

And we used to sing Schubert songs. We had a golden retriever called Simmy who would wander off. He would wander around Ilkley and we were always being rung up by the cinema saying, 'Could you come and pick your dog up because he's been shaking hands with the projectionist and we can't start the film'. And so my father and I would set out to fetch him and we used to sing 'To wander is to Si-i-i-mmy's bliss, to wander, to wander' – our version of the opening song of *Die schöne Müllerin*.

My father was once very upset because the music mistress at my school thought Beethoven was cold! How could she say Beethoven was cold? He was just horrified. And that's the only time I would see him cry to music, when he heard Beethoven. My father and I used to play the Beethoven symphonies as piano duets rather badly. Then I had an accident – I fell off a horse when I was 14 – and that put paid to my piano-playing, not that I'd ever been that good. I studied music for O level and that was it.

Children ought to be nailed to the piano! Music is terribly important. Even if you only learn the rudiments it sets you up for life. It gives you a glimpse into a world where the priorities are right. It's an abstract language that's so powerful and to experience that at first hand is unforgettable. Since [my husband] Leo died in November the things that have brought me closest to tears – and I've not yet cried – but have also provided the most joy, are music and poetry.

My mother had her leg stroked by Elgar. She was at school with a girl called Eileen Brewer who was the daughter of the organist Sir Herbert Brewer, and she'd often go and stay. And once at lunch, Sir Edward stroked her knee! I suppose that would be considered scandalous these days.

When I wrote my novel *Appassionata*, it was a logical step really because I used to have Radio 3 on the whole time – I'd be immersed in music. So when I introduced the conductor Rannaldini into my books, the music really started there. It was heaven to step into that world. The lucky thing about being an author is that you can meet your gods (now I'm meeting all these racing and horse gods for my next novel). And the music community became such friends. I went all round Europe with the Scottish National Orchestra, who



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are all as wild as kites! Lovely people. They partied so much but produced this amazing music the next day. Rehearsals were always a little subdued...

The musicians' stories at dinner after concerts were endless and hysterical. Musicians are funnier than people in any other profession. I was so shocked at how irreverent to the conductor they all were. And conductors are so sexually competitive! Incredible... I remember after *Appassionata* came out, someone came up to me and said, 'How dare you be so unkind by pillorying my friend Georg Solti?' I'd never even met him and he hadn't entered my mind. But it shows that there's definitely a sort of conducting 'type'. I remember sitting in on the rehearsals for *Don Carlos* at Covent Garden when Bernard Haitink was conducting. He was terrifying!

I always have a vision of Beethoven arriving in Heaven with the *Choral Symphony* blaring out and the 'Ode to Joy' being sung – and he could hear it. Isn't that just the saddest thing: that at the first performance, he wasn't able to hear his own masterpiece? ⑥

Jilly Cooper's novels are published by Simon & Schuster

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